



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

BX 2157

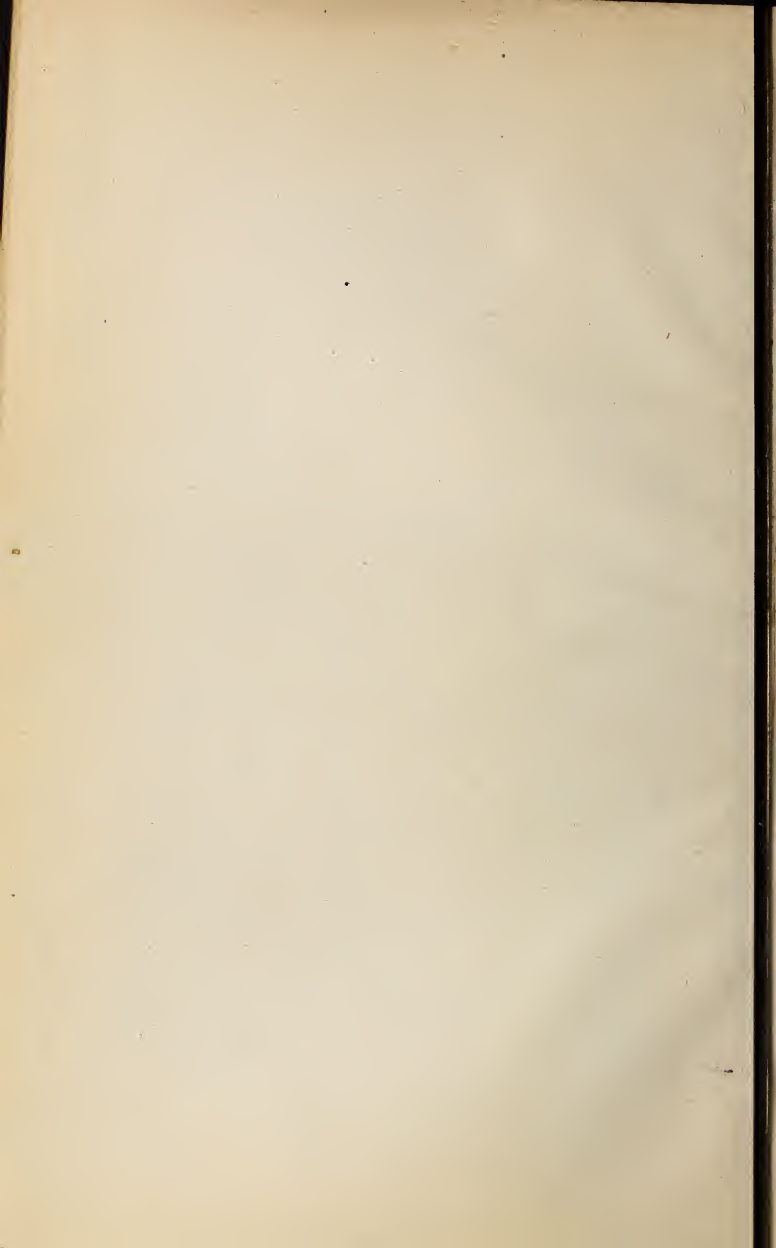
Chap.

Copyright No.

Shelf P 3

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.







3123 E

THE PARADISE OF GOD;

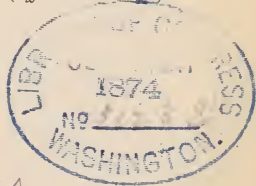
OR,

The Virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

By a Father of the Society of Jesus.

Quis non amantem redamet? Quis non redemptus diligit;
et Corde in isto seligat Aeterna tabernacula?

(*Off. Ssmi. Cordis.*)



BALTIMORE: 4

PUBLISHED BY JOHN MURPHY & Co.

182 BALTIMORE STREET.

LONDON: R. WASHBOURNE.

1874.

THE LIBRARY
OF CONGRESS
—
WASHINGTON

BX 2157
P3

APPROBATIONS.

Imprimatur, si videbitur Rmo. Archiep.

JOS. E. KELLER, S. J.,
Provl. Md.

IMPRIMATUR,

J. ROOSEVELT BAYLEY,

Archiep. Baltimorensis.

Baltimore, 12 Jan., 1874.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by
JOHN MURPHY, *Per.*
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.



TO MARY,
QUEEN OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS,
THIS BOOK IS OFFERED,
WITH THE TIMID HOPE THAT IT WILL BE PRESENTED TO
THE HEART WHOSE VIRTUES IT FAINTLY TRACES,
AND WITH THE ASSURANCE
THAT, IF PRESENTED BY HER IMMACULATE HANDS,
IT WILL BE ACCEPTED BY THAT COMPASSIONATE HEART,
AS A TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE
FOR WHICH THE LANGUAGE OF HEAVEN WILL SUFFICE
ONLY BECAUSE IT SHALL BE SPOKEN FOR EVER,
(IF THE FINAL GRACE BE VOUCHSAFED,)
BY ONE WHO SHOULD LOVE MUCH
BECAUSE HE HAD MUCH TO BE FORGIVEN.



EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE MESSENGER SERIES.

THE Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has been published in this country since April, 1866, as a monthly bulletin of the Apostleship of Prayer, has already produced a series of works reprinted from its monthly numbers in separate volumes:—

The Acts of the Early Martyrs, translated for the Messenger from Ruinart, Surius and other authentic sources, by Rev. J. M. A. Fastré, S. J.*

The Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by Rev. S. Franco, S. J., translated for the Messenger.†

Leandro, or, The Sign of the Cross, written for the Messenger.‡

* Published in 3 vols. by Cunningham, Philadelphia, (4th vol. in preparation.)

† Published in book-form by Murphy & Co., Baltimore.

‡ Published by Cunningham.

Simon Peter and Simon Magus, by Rev. J. J. Franco, S. J., translated for the Messenger.*

God our Father, by the author of Happiness of Heaven: written for the Messenger.†

The Catechism of Devotion to the Sacred Heart; by Rev. R. Pierick, S. J.

The Catechism of the Apostleship of Prayer; by a Missionary Priest.

These two little books are admirable for the clearness and fulness of their explanation of the subjects which they treat. They can be had in cloth or paper binding at the Messenger office, Woodstock College, Md.

The Paradise of God, or, The Virtues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; written for the Messenger by a Father of the Society of Jesus.‡

Historical scenes of the 4th century of the Church, translated from Franco's "Tigranate." This work is preparing for early publication.

For the honor of the Catholic Press in the

* Published by Cunningham.

† Published by Murphy & Co.

‡ Published by Murphy & Co., Baltimore.

United States, we refer to the above series as a gratifying evidence of the merit of our writers, and as an encouragement to them to persevere in their labors for a great and good cause; as an inducement to others, who possess talents and abilities, to enter into a field which promises so rich a harvest for the good of Religion and for the glory of God.

We can not boast that our Catholic Literature is, in any way, commensurate with the wants of our people, or that it is able to stem the foul tide of impious publications, which flood the land and engulf thousands of unhappy victims in destruction of soul and body. Catholic publications can not stoop to the means which others employ to secure an extensive circulation. They can not pander to the passions, excite the imagination, cater to the depraved taste, or flatter the corrupt tendencies of the multitude. The world is not with us. We struggle against an overwhelming current. The principles we must advocate, the ideas we must foster and defend, the projects we must support, in a word, all the ends we must aim at, to be true to our conscience, to our Faith and

to our God, are of such a nature as will never enlist the popular sympathy in their favor. We must attack the pet theories of the world; we must continually protest against what the world esteems; we must ever raise a warning voice where worldly wisdom laughs at the idea of danger. And all these are elements which perpetually harass us, hamper us, thwart us, militate against our success.

Catholics, living in the midst of such a world, are not a little subject to its influences, swayed by its power, perhaps intimidated by its hostility and prone to conciliate it,—unconsciously, we trust,—by some concessions, which always weaken their true Catholic instincts and open the way to further and more dangerous sacrifices.

We see this weak spirit of compromise manifesting itself especially, and with most disastrous effects, in the favor shown to many popular periodicals, which are openly and shamefully hostile to our holy and venerable Faith; or which, if they preserve some show of liberality, yet fill their pages with such matter in history, science, fiction, poetry, as must gradually undermine every prin-

ciple of true morality, every sentiment of Catholic piety, and replace them by a false glitter of utilitarian honesty and a morbid sentimentalism in which Faith itself will finally be smothered. The poison is pleasant, because it is sweetened; it is taken without suspicion, because it is disguised; but it carries death to the soul, because it is a real poison.

Look at it as you will, the Press is the great engine which the world now turns against the Church, and with which it strives with all its wicked energy, if not to demolish her impregnable walls, at least to strike down her defenders, to slay her children, and to stay the progress of her conquests. The losses inflicted on the Church by this powerful engine are utterly incalculable; and it is time that we were roused to a full sense of these losses and took active and energetic measures to prevent them.

There is but one means to do this, and our Holy Father has often raised his voice to make it known to us. It is to oppose Press to Press; literature to literature; periodicals to periodicals; books to books; science to science. We must use the same

weapons which our adversaries use, and fight them on their own ground. Catholic writers are needed; Catholic books must be printed; Catholic periodicals must be circulated, and circulated as the opposing periodicals are, by tens and hundreds of thousands, to carry the truth to every mind, sound morality to every heart; to unmask the errors of every kind which are stalking boldly over the land in the disguise of truth; to refute the conscious or unconscious calumnies which blacken the Church and make her hideous to thousands who would love her if they were permitted to see her as she is; in a word, to do battle for virtue, for justice, for truth, for the best interests of our country and our fellow-men.

We are far from possessing such writers and such publications, either of the ability or in the number which are required to effect these all-important results. Means are wanting; the generosity which would furnish the means is wanting; support even for the few Catholic periodicals we have, is wanting. Are we then not alive to the danger? Are we not sensible of the immense mis-

chief which is being done at every hour? Is there not Catholic zeal enough among us, Catholic wealth enough stored away where it is useless; Catholic talent enough, to establish a Catholic Press in America, that would be an honor to Religion, a defence to our country and to its liberty, a bulwark for the protection of our brethren and a terror to the enemies of Truth?

We could do this now, if we had but the will; and God grant that this will may soon be aroused! In the meantime, let us do what we can with the means and the abilities we have. Let us foster a taste for more useful, more substantial reading than is furnished by the Press which opposes us. Let our Catholic literature be raised to its proper standard and let us cultivate our tastes up to that elevation. Let us support our own publications, subscribe liberally to our own periodicals, encourage every effort made toward the end we should all have in view, the establishment of a strong, effective and influential Catholic Press.

We bespeak this patronage not merely for our own Messenger, but for all earnest, high-toned,

thoroughly Catholic periodicals and books, in the interest of our holy Faith, of our country and of the souls of millions who will thus be benefited for time and for Eternity.

THE EDITOR OF THE MESSENGER.

WOODSTOCK COLLEGE, Howard Co., Md. }
December 8, 1873.





DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

ALTHOUGH we cannot say that the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as revealed to the Faithful through the Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque,* had been, before her time, entirely unknown in the Church; yet it is evident that the Providence of God, which ever watches over the fortunes of His Church, gave her this devotion in our times, as a special protection from special dangers and as the means most adapted to secure her children against the wily stratagems of their enemies. Satan and the world are ever plotting the destruction of the Church; ever prowling around the Paradise in which God's children enjoy the sweets of their Father's prodigal love; ever striving to scale its walls and to lay waste its fair domain. But God has spoken His infallible

* B. Margaret Mary Alacoque was born in France, A. D. 1647, and entered the convent of the Visitation at Paray-le-Monial in 1671. In 1675 she had the vision which may be called the origin of the devotion to the Sacred Heart. She died Oct. 17th, 1690, and was beatified by Pope Pius IX. on the 19th of August, 1864.

promise ; His Church shall not perish. Satan shall not prevail against her. For every new attack, He gives a new defence ; for every stratagem, He devises a victorious safeguard ; to every new danger, He opposes a new and more than sufficient protection. Every evil that threatens, has its appropriate remedy. And this is so true, that we can always detect the evil, even when it is most artfully concealed ; we can tell its peculiar character, by the remedy which God prepares to counteract it.

But in no instance has this wonderful action of Divine Wisdom been more conspicuous, than in the adaptation of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus to the necessities and the dangers of the Church in these evil days upon which our lot has fallen. In former ages, the combats between the rival powers of the City of God and the City of Satan, were chiefly on the fields of the intellect. At first, Christian truth boldly attacked heathen philosophy, and it bled on the racks and on the scaffolds of Roman persecutors, till exhausted paganism could persecute no longer. Catholic dogma then found other opponents in the schisms and heresies which assailed one stronghold after another, until the grand fortress of Catholic theology stood firmly seated and fully defended with tower and moat and battlements, proof against every effort of the foe. Now, the battle-field is transferred to the moral nature of man ; the heart is aimed at by the powers leagued against God.

The world of to-day, with all its boast of enlightenment and scientific progress, is in reality almost devoid of what deserves the name of science. We grant that it has made marvellous advances in material science and in those branches of knowledge which aid the development of material resources. Modern science has fastened upon matter, and it is no wonder that the genius of man, turned with all its intense brilliancy on matter alone, should have penetrated so many secrets of nature, or that the study of a century should have been rewarded with the numerous and surprising discoveries of which our age is so proud. But all this, in comparison with mental and moral science, and especially with the science of divine Truth, hardly deserves the name of science. In this respect, it would be difficult to point to any age, in the entire history of civilization, in which the domain of real science was more deserted than it is in our day. In the fields of intellectual truth, and of those higher truths which elevate the mind of man to a supernatural sphere, without contradicting or violating its natural faculties, the leaders of modern thought are either utter strangers, or they are singularly careless of securing a solitary outpost or maintaining a foothold anywhere. They yield whatever may be demanded by the thousand and one systems which are born to-day to be buried on the morrow. The world is eternal or created in time; it is perpetual or destined to destruction; the soul of man is spiritual or

material ; immortal or perishable ; God is or is not ; —just as the ruling system of the day proclaims, save that the falsehood is ever more favorably received than the truth, and men seem to have lost all regard for the science of mind and for the higher science of Faith, in which they have been accustomed to see the dogmas of one day reversed by the dogmas of the next.

Science, as understood by the men of our times, is little more than a barren array of facts and experiments, all material, proving little and establishing nothing that will not be corrected or contradicted by future facts and fuller investigation. The world has, therefore, abandoned the fields of reason and of theology, in which it had suffered such defeats as left it no hope of success.

But its aim now is to corrupt the heart of man ; to blast in it every germ of religious feeling, of veneration for a supreme Creator, of tenderness towards a Father who is in heaven ; of desire for eternal good, of fear of everlasting evils. Fallen nature is rehabilitated by the wise men of the day, after their own fashion. They have issued their decree — that human nature is self-sustaining and self-sufficient. It is good, perfect, holy. It has no evil passions, no downward tendencies, no concupiscence of evil. It is not fallen, not wounded. It needs no redemption, no healing ; no Redeemer, no God. Let it work out its own destiny with its own inherent powers, and it will be perfectly and supremely happy.

With such doctrines widely spread and adopted, it is easy to conclude that the consequence must be a hatred of Religion which is based on the fall of our nature and on the necessity of a supernatural succor to raise it; contempt for God, who is represented as imposing an absurd faith, as a condition for His favor. And what is this but changing earth into hell and forcing mankind to begin here what it is Satan's desire that they should continue forever hereafter: hating the God who created them only to make them eternally blessed and whom they themselves have compelled to turn His love into justice.

It is almost incredible that men should come to this state. But when you let loose the evil passions of the human heart and sanctify the lusts of the flesh, you corrupt the heart to its very core and turn all its native goodness, affection, and tenderness into poison.

Such is the tendency of modern rebellion against God; such the danger which now threatens our race. Goodness and virtue, God and Religion are attacked in their last stronghold, the heart of man; and from the hearts of those who are foremost in the hostile camp they have already been expelled. To meet this new attack, God gives His Church a new defence, opens a new asylum, erects a new bulwark. As the heart of man is the threatened point, the Heart of Jesus is the defence; it is opened as a city of refuge; it closes around us as a wall of protection. Our hearts are brought under the influ-

ence of a divine Heart, and learn to esteem what it esteemed, to love what it loved, to hate what it hated. They are made familiar with its infinite beauties, its inexhaustible treasures, its divine virtues, its ineffable excellence; and while they cannot avoid loving it, they must desire to resemble it; and this gradually fills them with its spirit, infuses its virtues into them and saves them from the corrupting influences of the worldly spirit.

We need not wonder, therefore, that, when this new and unexpected device of God's watchful Providence over His Elect was discovered by His opponents, no means were left untried by them to destroy or to weaken its power. Their instinct told them that the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus would foil all their plans and defeat all their attempts; and, therefore, they summoned up all their energies to combat the devotion, to decry it, to ridicule it, to crush it. They enlisted against it all the talent they could command. Theologians, philosophers, journalists, encyclopedists turned their learning, their sophistry, their wit and sarcasm against the new devotion. Even a pretended council* was assembled to condemn it as a false and dangerous novelty. But all in vain. Satan can resist God, but he cannot

* The Synod of Pistoia was convoked, in opposition to the Holy See, by the schismatical Bishop, Scipio Ricci, in 1786. Its decrees were condemned. The Bull of Pius VI., "*Auctorem Fidei*," finally ended the long contest and gave the victory to the devotion, in 1794.

overcome Him. The devotion to the Sacred Heart had come from God, as the necessary remedy for the threatening evil of the times, and therefore, though it naturally excited as violent a storm of opposition as His sworn enemies could raise, it was necessarily victorious, by virtue of the Divine Omnipotence by which it was supported.

The Church, true to the instinct which tells her where her safety lies, embraced the devotion with eager joy. The Holy See, which speaks with the infallible authority of God when it decides what is and what is not conformable to the truth either in belief or in practice, solemnly approved the devotion and urged its adoption on the Faithful, as a means to arouse in their hearts that tender, personal love for the Incarnate Word, which would counteract the personal hatred of God and of His Christ, engendered and fostered by the spirit of modern infidelity. The children of the Church, obedient to the voice of their Mother warning them of danger, have fled for refuge to the secure asylum of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They are few in number, like those who found safety in the Ark when the Deluge was at hand; but they come from all lands, and with eager, fearful yet hopeful earnestness, they press on towards the opening made in the side of the new Ark of salvation, which will save them from destruction.

And now there is a spirit stirring the great heart of the Church: it is a spirit of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Cities and Dioceses have felt

its movement; kingdoms and armies have obeyed its voice; Religious orders and pious associations have acknowledged its power. And hence we have heard of cities and dioceses, kingdoms and armies, Religious orders and pious associations publicly and solemnly consecrating themselves to the Sacred Heart. And this spirit of consecration will continue to whisper to the heart of the Church, it will continue to speak of the perils which surround her, of the safety which the Sacred Heart offers, until the whole Church, in every land under heaven, will send up to the Sacred Heart of Jesus one universal, solemn act, consecrating herself and all her children to its worship, to its honor, to its defence, to the tenderest personal love for the Incarnate God, whose Heart is so beautifully loving, so bountifully provident, so gloriously overflowing with grace and virtue and strength for her protection.

But this tender love for the Divine Person of our Lord can be produced only by a familiar intercourse with Him. We must know Him, know especially His love for us; else we can not love Him. "*Ignoti nulla cupido.*" But where our hearts find a Heart that loves them truly, unselfishly, ardently, they can not help loving that Heart in return. And when love for the sacred Person of our Saviour has been enkindled in us, our hearts are safe. The spirit of God has been poured into them and has produced that filial affection which cries out, "*Abba, Father!*" and which is a foretaste as well as a pledge

of the joys of our great Father's house in heaven. Intense personal love of God, which is to be our beatitude eternally, has begun to be our happy occupation here. Earth is changed into heaven. The banished sons of Adam are restored to Paradise and to the familiarity with God, which made Paradise the ante-chamber of heaven.

We have therefore taken this idea of a return to Paradise, as the groundwork of the following considerations on the Sacred Heart. This Heart is, in very deed, the master-piece of creation, in all that is lovely, delightful, sweet, gentle, beautiful, magnificent. It is a Paradise infinitely more favored than was the garden of Eden from which sin expelled us. The virtues of the Sacred Heart are the flowers, the blossoms, the fruits, whose sweetness and whose nourishment give health and life, and prepare us for the eternal Paradise of heaven.

But since these virtues of the Sacred Heart were practised by our Divine Lord for love of us, so that we might be induced, by the strongest motive, to imitate His examples; and since this imitation is, at the same time, a necessary condition of our sharing in the merits of His redemption, and a necessary consequence of the love which will bind our hearts to His; the Paradise of His Heart becomes also a school in which He Himself is our Teacher and in which He Himself gives us lessons and examples in the science of the Saints.

This appeared to be the most practical, the most

solid, as well as the most tender and affectionate development of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We all know what beautiful love unites together the hearts of docile scholars and the heart of a truly good, wise, devoted and affectionate teacher; how easily and naturally the disciples are drawn, by their love of the Master, to think with him, to speak as he speaks, to live as he lives. May we not hope, then, that our love for a Divine Teacher, for an infinitely wise, tender, affectionate Master, will produce in us the same happy result?

Let us, therefore, enter into this beautiful and divine Paradise; let us feast our souls on its heavenly fruits and adorn them with its undying blossoms. Happy we, if its loveliness charms our hearts to dwell forever within its happy and holy cloisters, to make our permanent home, for time and eternity, in this Paradise of God.



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
EDITOR'S PREFACE. THE MESSENGER SERIES	13
INTRODUCTION. DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART	
OF JESUS	21
CHAPTER	
I. MEEKNESS OF THE SACRED HEART	33
II. HUMILITY OF THE SACRED HEART	54
III. MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY IN PRACTICE	79
IV. OBEDIENCE OF THE SACRED HEART	99
V. PATIENCE " " "	139
VI. FORTITUDE " " "	155
VII. PRUDENCE " " "	173
VIII. ZEAL " " "	197
IX. PRAYER " " "	228
X. UNWORLDLINESS " " "	249
XI. UNSELFISHNESS " " "	269
XII. POVERTY " " "	286
XIII. CHARITY " " "	300
XIV. BROTHERLY LOVE	317
XV. LOVE OF GOD	336
XVI. THE LAST LESSON. THE SCIENCE OF THE	
SAINTS	350

THE PARADISE OF GOD,

OR THE

VIRTUES OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEEKNESS OF THE SACRED HEART.

“Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart.” — MATT. xi. 29.

AT the very entrance of the Paradise of God, which is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we read this sentence, written in letters of heavenly light. These words are at the same time an invitation and a warning — an invitation, because we are bid to approach and be instructed. Our Teacher is prepared to give us our lessons. “Come, my children,” he says, “hearken to me. I will teach you; come to me and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded.” (Ps. xxxiii.) There is no severity or harshness, no long array of hard con-

ditions to be fulfilled; “come, hearken, be enlightened;” this is all that is required. It is an invitation of the most pressing kind, an almost irresistible drawing of our souls towards this Divine Teacher. But it is at the same time a warning, because we must come prepared to listen and to learn—we must be willing to receive the lessons which He will give us, and those lessons are not such as the world has been teaching us; we must forget all that we learned in that bad school, and open our minds and hearts to lessons of meekness and humility. If we are thus disposed, the heavenly light in which those words are emblazoned on the entrance of the Sacred Heart will not dazzle our eyes; we need not fear, we may enter with confidence into this Divine School. We call it a school and yet a Paradise; there is no contradiction in this. For as there are two methods of imparting worldly knowledge—one by abstract principles, another by the easier and more interesting method of practice or example—so here, we are taught in this latter mode; we are in-

troduced at once into this fair garden of delights and learn the nature and the value of its various plants and flowers and fruits, by feasting our eyes on their loveliness, by adorning ourselves with their beauty and filling our hearts with their nourishment. And since our Divine Teacher gives us meekness as his first lesson, since meekness is the first of the rare and precious fruits which we meet in His Sacred Heart, let us begin by learning this first lesson—the meekness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is not meekness in general; for, our Teacher will not speak of anything beyond Himself or of which He is not Himself the perfection and the model. It is the meekness of the Sacred Heart which we are to study; it is this first fruit of the Paradise which we are to taste; it is with this fair flower's fragrance that we are to be refreshed.

Meekness, according to the Angelic Doctor, is a moral virtue which restrains anger and banishes all thought or desire of revenge in return for injuries received. This then is the characteristic virtue of the Sacred Heart. That lovely region of heavenly peace is free

from all excitement of passion; no storms ever disturb its serenity; the gentlest zephyrs waft its perfumes on their wings. It is the abode of God with men, and therefore is a holy Temple, in which perpetual tranquillity reigns. We call meekness the characteristic virtue of the Sacred Heart, because our Lord himself indicates it to us as such when He says: "learn of me because I am meek;" because in the types and figures and prophecies of the old law, meekness and clemency seem to be the leading features in the bright picture of His coming glory. He is the meek and gentle Abel sacrificed to his brother's envy; the obedient Isaac laid unmurmuring on the altar to be slain; the patient and forgiving Joseph sold into bondage by his jealous brethren. He is the Lamb slain for the safety of his people, whose blood screens them from the blows of God's anger; He is prefigured by the gentle dove that was offered as an oblation of peace; of Him it is said that He will be the Prince of Peace; in His kingdom eternal tranquillity shall reign; there shall be no clamor, no contentions;

dragons and lions shall be banished or made harmless. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid and the calf, and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. (*Is. xi.*) Of Him it is said: "Behold a king shall reign in justice, and the work of justice shall be peace, and the service of justice, quietness and security for ever; the broken reed he shall not break and the smoking flax he shall not quench." (*Is. xlii.*)

But there is no end to the amiable pictures of meekness furnished by the Old Testament as types of the Sacred Heart. Let us pass on to the Gospels. The first name given to our Divine Lord by him who was sent to introduce Him to the world, is "the Lamb of God." "Behold the Lamb of God," said John the Baptist to the Jews who stood near him when Jesus approached. (*Jno. i. 29.*) That title, which is the most striking expression for all that is gentle and meek, forbearing and uncomplaining, that name which is universally received as synonymous with

meekness itself, is the first by which Jesus is made known to men; and it is by His own inspiration that His holy Precursor thus announces Him to the world. Is not this as much as if He said to us that meekness was to be his predominant and characteristic trait, his favorite quality, the virtue most dear to His Heart? What other lesson then could we expect from him as his first, but that of meekness: learn of me because I am meek of heart?

But to form a more adequate idea of the meekness of the Sacred Heart, we must go back to the ages of eternity, when God was alone in His all-sufficient majesty and beatitude. Before the angels were called forth from nothingness to sing their glad hymns around the throne of God; before the earth was poised on its foundations; before the morning stars sang together in praise of the hand that had made them; before man stood in Paradise, a bright and happy image of his Maker: we can study the meekness of that Heart which was, in the mind of God, the Heart of hearts, the first of all hearts,

the Heart upon which all other hearts were to be modelled, and by which all other hearts were to be judged. There, in that silent but all-blissful eternity, deep down in the unfathomable bosom of the Eternal Father, the Divine Word knew and foresaw what was to be. He had before His view the entire cycle of the creation that was destined to revolve around Him as its centre, that was to go forth from God through Him, and through Him return to God — and oh! what a sight that was to His Divine eye! There was beauty and grace, glory and greatness, countless myriads of bright manifestations of God's power and goodness and wisdom and love, a world of loveliness destined to give glory to its Creator. But at the same time, there was a scene of wild desolation, a widespread, hopeless ruin, a deluge of dark and death-bearing iniquity, a world marred and ruined by the malice and ingratitude of its inhabitants, a countless host of creatures formed after His model and blessed with His wonderful gifts, yet overwhelmed with sin, darkened and doomed, by the wickedness of their own

hearts. He foresaw the creation of man destined to replace the fallen angels on their thrones, the boundless love with which this favored creature was to be surrounded, the numberless marks of Divine beneficence he was to receive, the ornaments of nature and of grace which were to be lavished upon him, the sweet and glorious duty which would be assigned him as the only condition for meriting the high honors that awaited him in the house of God. Yes, He foresaw all these proofs of God's love for man; but He also foresaw the base, the unaccountably stupid and degrading ingratitude of the same much-favored creature; his fall and condemnation, his irretrievable and eternal destruction, were not some device of almost more than Divine mercy provided to restore the ruin. He foresaw all the numberless deep and dark crimes that would disgrace the earth and outrage heaven, from the first entrance of sin into the world until the dawn of the bright morning that would herald a Saviour's birth to the unfortunate descendants of Adam. He foresaw, what must have

been infinitely more offensive, the equally numberless and even deeper and darker deeds that would be done by the redeemed creation; by men for whom a God had given Himself as a ransom and redemption. He saw us; each one of us was clearly and distinctly before His mind; He knew us then as He knows us to-day; He saw all our unworthiness, all our ingratitude, all our wickedness, all the sins which would blacken our souls and make them hideous and hateful to God, through our own meanness and malice. Oh! what a sad spectacle this must have been to that most pure and holy God! enough surely to turn all mercy into inexorable justice, all love into vengeance, all gentleness into the bitterness of a just and holy indignation. But, O wonderful God! There is no bitterness in Him, no anger. For us He is all meekness and compassion. Behold Him there, with the eye of faith; see, there in the deep abyss of His Father's bosom — oh, what a vision is there presented to us! The Eternal Father has taken the form of Divine Justice; He is seated on his dread

throne, and at His side are vengeance and destruction. An altar is erected upon which the guilty, the unpardonable criminal is to be punished. The sentence has been pronounced, the ministers of the Divine Justice lay hold of their prey, they stretch him upon the altar, all helpless and hopeless, and the blows justly merited fall upon him. But lo! the victim is not the guilty race which has called down the wrath of heaven upon itself! There is a Lamb upon that altar, spotless, innocent, pure; the Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth, the Lamb of God who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world, the Victim of propitiation who will bear the blows of Divine Justice, so that the guilty may be spared; the Lamb whose blood washes away the sentence of condemnation pronounced against us! And, O joy of joys! the victim is approved! the sacrifice is accepted! As we gaze upon that mysterious holocaust, ever burning and yet never consumed, we behold justice changed into mercy, vengeance and destruction merged into peace and pardon, and by some transforming magic of compas-

sionate love, there appears before us the vision of a thorn-crowned Heart, surrounded by the flames of the sacrifice; and we hear a voice that says: "Behold the Heart which will love mankind with a love so divinely meek, so divinely forgiving." All this was hidden in the bosom of God. No creature was there to witness the wonders of this loving meekness; but, in some mysterious manner, all creation is tinged with the light of that sacrifice, and seems to arise out of it, bathed in its glory and reflecting its bright flames. Mary's preëminent sanctity gives back its image from her immaculate soul; the angelic and the human natures are reddened with its glow, and adorned with its brilliancy, and they seem to revolve around it, like planets around the central source of all their beauty. If then the foreseen wickedness and ingratitude of mankind were unable to deprive us of the love of the Eternal Word; if, in spite of all our unworthiness, He would still offer Himself as our victim and our ransom, may we not say that His meekness dates from eternity? that to learn His meekness we

must go back to the ages before the creation, when God was all alone, all to Himself, and yet even then loving us with an eternal love and showing towards us an eternal and divine forbearance? From all eternity our meek Saviour prepared that Heart which was to love us, his enemies; He prepared that inexhaustible patience with which it would bear with us, that immutable gentleness with which it would meet our fretfulness, that unconquerable mildness with which it would receive all our repulses, that persevering clemency which would still pardon and bless, even when it had been a thousand times abused. From all eternity He placed His delights in that Heart, He longed for the hour in which He might conceal Himself within it with all His treasures, to lie in wait for our hearts, and to compel them by the sweet violence of His meekness to come and dwell in His heart with Him, and to make Him happy by enjoying His gifts. It was His meekness which pleaded for the guilty parents of our race and gave them the promise of a coming Redeemer. His meekness

saved the hopes of the future world when the wrath of God deluged the earth for the sins of men. His meekness appeased the anger of the Almighty through the sacrifices of the ancient covenant which were types of His merits and symbols of His love. His meekness bore with the stiff-necked and ungrateful race in whom the promises of His mercy were to be perpetuated till their fulfilment. His meekness pleaded for the sin-stained world all through those long four thousand years of gloom, when nought came up from the earth to heaven but the clamors of man's wickedness and crimes, the voice of blood crying for vengeance. A thousand times the arm of God was raised to crush the guilty wretches who continued to insult Him: a thousand times it was arrested by the pleadings of that meekness, by the vision of that Heart crowned with thorns, surrounded by the fire of its sacrifice, and made the abode of that meekly forgiving love.

But at length, the long day of expectation is drawing to a close; the hour is at hand in which the greatest of all wonders

will be wrought. The time has come for the heavens to bow down and give to the earth the kiss of peace and to bring to lost man his promised Redeemer. How gladly the Eternal Son of the Most High descends from His throne! How gladly He lays aside the splendors of the Divinity! How joyously He goes down to the unhappy earth, to take upon Himself the fallen nature of man, so that it may be raised again in His Person. He comes to us with that Heart which He has prepared to love us; He comes to us with all that meekness and forbearance, that patience and clemency, with all those heavenly treasures with which He conceals himself in His divine Heart. That Heart which has been, from all eternity, a vision of Peace in the bosom of the Father, is now a real, a living heart, beating in the bosom of Jesus upon earth. It is a heart full of compassion, full of tenderness; a heart that can suffer with infinite forbearance all our miseries, all our ingratitude; a heart that can forgive and forget, no matter how often or how deeply we have wronged it. With this

heart Jesus appears among men, and from this heart comes forth that first lesson which He gives us: "Learn of me because I am meek of heart." From the same source, an inexhaustible source of meekness, will come forth words of heavenly sweetness, parables of divine compassion, precepts of truly God-like charity. Review the history of the Heart of Jesus upon earth; go with it from the crib of Bethlehem to the Pagan cities of Egypt; from the peaceful home of Nazareth through the hamlets of Galilee and Judea; follow it through the winding streets of Jerusalem; see it in the midst of its friends and of its enemies; ascend with it along the way of sorrows to where it was finally broken with the very excess of its loving forbearance towards sinners: and you will find meekness its most prominent character; meekness beams from the Heart of Jesus through His mild eyes; meekness flows from His hands in miraculous streams of power to relieve the sorrows of men, to dry their tears, to heal their diseases; meekness dwells upon His lips and pours forth from them the sweet accents of His Divine voice; dictates those

gentle words, whose power is irresistible because their sweetness is Divine. Meekness directs every action and appears in every trait; it invests His whole being with a loveliness which draws the souls of men, and lays all hearts at His feet, willing trophies of His all-powerful love. Listen to His words; they are the accents of meekness itself. "Love one another, as I have loved you. Do to one another as I have done unto you. Forgive and you shall be forgiven. Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you and revile you. Pray for them that persecute you. This is my commandment that you love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Forgive not only seven times, but seventy times seven times. If a man strike you on the right cheek, present to him also the other. Leave your offering at the foot of the altar and go first and be reconciled to your brother." The Gospel is full of such lessons as these—lessons of Divine meekness, which must be our admiration, and which should be our guides and our consolation. O what

a heart is this! What strange, unearthly doctrine it gives forth! But it is not merely by word that He proves His meekness, not only by word that He teaches it to us. His life, His actions, far more eloquently than even His words, inculcate the same lesson, proclaim the same truth. He was always the meek Lamb, which He had chosen as His favorite type. In Him was no guile, no bitterness, no resentment, no feeling of revenge. Many an unkind look afflicted Him, many a harsh word fell cold and chilling upon His heart, many a repulse met the kindness and goodness with which He would have won back some stray sheep to His bosom; many an ungrateful infidelity was the only reward of His untiring patience and of His unfailing beneficence: but the sweetness of His heart was not soured, its serenity was not ruffled, its gentleness was not rebuked; when He was reviled, He did not revile; when He suffered, He threatened not; (1 *Pet.*) but was silent like a lamb before its shearer, (*Is.* liii.) nay, like a lamb in the midst of wolves whose fury will tear it in

pieces. His enemies press around Him, they howl their mad rage against Him. They pour out their bitter invectives; they load Him with reproaches. To them He is a Samaritan, He has a demon; He is full of wickedness; He is a seducer of the people, a destroyer of peace, an enemy of His country, a man worthy of death, a blasphemer, a violator of all laws human and divine. All this and much more than this they vilely cast into His very face in their jealous impiety; they thirst for His blood; they plot against Him, how they may put Him to death. But Jesus is still the silent lamb, meekly gazing upon the wolves that surround Him, as if He knew not that He was the object of their hate. Nay, His Heart is so unconquerably meek and forgiving, that He loves those very enemies with an infinite love, He looks upon them with an infinite compassion, He blesses them with an infinite effusion of mercy. For them He has come down from heaven, for them He has suffered and toiled during the days of His mortal pilgrimage; for them He has prayed in the dismal desert, on the summit of the solitary

mountains; for them He will still suffer and pray; for them He will shed His blood and lay down His life. Peter denies Him, the other Apostles and disciples abandon Him; Judas, one of the twelve, betrays Him and sells Him to His enemies; the soldiers of the High Priests bind Him, drag Him ignominiously through the streets of Jerusalem; one strikes Him on the face, others scourge Him, crown Him with thorns, spit upon Him, mock and insult Him; they cry out for His blood, they crucify Him, they exult in His torments and triumph in His death. And He, the mild and forgiving Jesus, with a heart not to be soured, with a heart divinely forbearing and infinitely meek, either receives their insults in silence, or answers with gentle sweetness; He gives to Peter a look of mercy, to Judas the name of friend, to others the salutation: "Peace be to you;" to all He stretches out His arms to embrace them; for His very executioners His only feeling is one of uncontrollable love, which bursts forth in a divine prayer for their pardon: "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." His blood, shed by the

fury of His enemies, reddens the guilty earth, stains the ignominious cross, falls upon those who scourge Him and crucify Him and mock Him on His gibbet. But His blood washes away the handwriting of death that stood against us, and cries to heaven, not for vengeance, but for mercy, for grace, for God's choicest benedictions. O meekness of the Heart of Jesus! boundless, inexhaustible, truly infinite, since nothing less could have resisted such a storm of ingratitude and baseness! Our minds cannot measure this meekness; earth has no language to express it; the heart of man is not capacious enough to contain it. But if we could obtain only one drop of that immense ocean of meekness for our hearts, we should have derived ample fruit from the first lesson of the Heart of Jesus.

And now we have seen something of the meekness of that Divine Heart which has deigned to admit us to a view of its treasures. We might gaze on it forever, and forever feast our souls on the sweetness of this first of the fruits of that heavenly Paradise. But in order to deserve to do this in

its fulness, we must begin by looking into our own hearts, and making them more like the Heart of Jesus than they have been until now. He gives us the lessons; but they will profit us nothing unless we learn them and practise them. We too must be meek of heart, we must be willing to forgive and forget; we must receive injuries without murmuring, reproaches without indignation, affronts without feelings of revenge; we must admit no resentment into our souls, no rancor into our bosoms; we must not revile when we are reviled, nor threaten when we suffer; we must be as lambs led to the slaughter, not opening our mouths to complain of those that persecute us. Thus shall we be the children of our Father who is in heaven; thus shall we be worthy to possess an inheritance in that blissful Paradise; for, "blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and speak all that is evil against you for my sake. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (*Matt. v.*)

CHAPTER II.

THE HUMILITY OF THE SACRED HEART.

“Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart.”—MATT. xi. 29.

THE love of Jesus for our fallen race is the light which illumines the whole region of the Paradise of His Sacred Heart, into which we have just been admitted. The rays of that sun gild the bright words which we saw inscribed on the portals of this garden of delights: “Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart.” Its light pervades the entire region; it is to be our constant guide. It diffuses itself over the lovely landscape; it paints all the flowers in their varied hues; it ripens all the fruits and gives them their rich colors and their luscious tastes. It slumbers on the bosom of the placid lake, sparkles in the playful fountain, and glimmers in the rippling stream. It glows on the mountain-top, and steals into the deep recesses of grove and valley; every-

where making all things glad and bright and rich and beautiful by the divine magic of its living light.

The love of Jesus for our fallen race is the reality which the symbol of His Sacred Heart represents. For, as the heart is the consecrated type of love, so the Heart of Jesus is the figure or symbol of the love of Jesus, of His love for us. It is true that the living and beating Heart of the Saviour, that Heart of flesh which sends His sacred blood tingling through His veins, that Heart which, like the other portions of the human nature assumed by the Eternal Word, has become a part of the sacred Person of the Man-God, is, by the very fact of the hypostatic union, worthy of profoundest adoration as the Heart of God; yet, nevertheless, it is true to say, that the principal object of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the inexhaustible love for us of which it is the seat and the symbol. It is to this love especially that He Himself called our attention when He deigned to propose His Heart to our veneration. "Behold," he said, "this Heart, which has

loved mankind so much; which has spent and exhausted itself in giving proofs of its love."

And if this is so, if the Heart of Jesus is the love of Jesus, then it follows that the virtues of the Sacred Heart are the virtues of the love of Jesus; that is to say, the virtues which Jesus practised through love of us, either that we might have such models as we need, or that we might receive, through the merits which His virtues acquired, the pardon, the grace, the reward which of ourselves we should forever have been unable to reach.

The humility of the Sacred Heart is, then, the humility of the love of Jesus, or the humility of Jesus through love for us; the humility which He practised to give us the strongest possible motive for imitation. And this virtue He places on a level with meekness, as His first lesson: "Learn of me to be meek and humble of heart."

For Himself, He needed not the virtue of humility. Indeed it would be difficult to find two terms more opposed to one another,

less compatible with one another, than "humility" and "the Son of the Most High." In Him all was great and noble, and worthy of all praise and glory. Even if we consider only His human nature, though, as a created nature, it is infinitely below the divine, yet even that is the very acme of human perfection. In mind, in soul, in body, nothing under God is more glorious, more gifted, more worthy of admiration and of eternal praise, than the Humanity of the Son of God. Humility, therefore, seems to have no place in Him; because humility depresses, makes lowly, obscures and effaces; and He is, by nature, the centre to which all honor tends; He is, by nature, at the summit of all things, the crowning glory of the universe.

But His wise love for us knew too well the necessity of this virtue for us, and the almost insurmountable repugnance of our fallen nature to whatever depresses and lowers it, to be satisfied with mere precept without example. Pride was the cause of our fall. "Pride is the beginning of all sin," says Ecclesiasticus (xv. 10). After having ruined the bright

Angels of heaven, pride ruined the fair creation of earth. Man had been exceedingly favored by his Maker; his nature had been adorned with marvellous gifts and enriched with surpassing grace. His place was at the head of the visible creation; he was born the king of the earth and the lord of all its wealth. He stood in Paradise, a noble work of God's wisdom and power, the favored child of heaven, the destined heir to the vacant thrones in God's heavenly kingdom. He was happy in his immortal life and imperishable vigor; blessed a thousandfold in the world of beauty and wealth, which was spread out before him; but infinitely more blessed in the assured hope of what was awaiting him hereafter. But the suggestion came from the envy of the fallen angel, that a more elevated position might be attained in despite of God; honors were within reach which the Sovereign Creator had denied to man. "Break the commandment of God; rebel against His yoke; eat the fruit which He has forbidden you to touch; and your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as God." (*Gen. iii.*) And,

oh! how eagerly the bait was snatched! How willingly was Lucifer obeyed in the hope of ascending higher, of becoming wiser, more powerful, happier than God had willed us to be! Pride was the beginning of all sin. Pride is the deep wound inflicted on our nature by Lucifer. Pride is the inheritance which Adam left to his unfortunate children. The inordinate desire of excellence, of distinction, of praise and glory, such is the ruling passion of our nature. "Excelsior" is the motto, the watchword of fallen, but not humbled, man. To rise higher and higher still, is the one grand struggle of man's life. We started in rebellion against God at the very dawn of our existence, and our whole history has been but a long series of proud rebellions against Him, against His law, against all authority derived from Him.

And, yet, "what hath our pride profited us, or what advantage hath our boasting brought us?" (*Wis. v.*) Like unfledged birds, foolishly leaping from the nest before they can support themselves on the air, we have fallen into an abyss of degradation.

We are the mere wrecks of what God had made us. We have not a single gift or excellence or merit, which might serve as a pretext for our self-glorification. We are "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." (*Apoc.* iii.) Deep and deadly are the wounds we bear in our nature: blindness in our intellect, concupiscence in our will, decay and death in our body. And though we are thus fallen and degraded, shorn of our glory and robbed of every supernatural good, yet, this has not opened our eyes to acknowledge our ruin; it has not sufficed to make us humble, to break our rebellious spirit and subject it to the punishment which it has deserved.

Such, then, is the ruin which the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus undertakes to restore; such the wound which it proposes to heal. As pride had been the origin of all sin, so must humility be the beginning of all grace. As pride had banished us from Paradise, humility must admit us again within its blissful precincts. As pride had placed the flaming sword of the Cherub as a guard over

the gate of the lost Eden, so now humility shines forth in letters of unearthly brilliancy over the entrance to this new Paradise, not to deter us or to hinder our approach, but to tell us that humility alone can open to fallen man the way to that happiness of which pride had deprived him.

It is easy to understand that words alone could hardly have sufficed to teach us this virtue. Had the Saviour appeared on earth, surrounded by all the pomp and glory and magnificence which, by every title, were due to Him, it would have been hard for us to learn of Him to love contempt and ignominy, to fly ostentation, and to avoid the esteem of men. His love for us made Him resort to a surer method to secure our welfare, though infinitely more painful to Himself.

His first act, when He girt Himself to this task of loving condescension, is an act of supreme and unutterable humility. "*Exinanivit semetipsum, formam servi accipiens*. He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." (*Phil.* ii. 7.) He humbled Himself: He annihilated Himself; He reduced Him-

self to nothing; He concealed the majesty of His Divinity in the nothingness of our nature. He refused the splendors, which, of right, belonged to the humanity united to His divine Person. He became the Incarnate God, such as our faith reveals Him to us; a fathomless abyss of humiliation; an unspeakable wonder of abasement; a mystery of lowliness so deep, so unsearchable, that God alone can know it as it is. There, in the deep silence of the sacred abode which He has chosen, He is forming that wonderful Heart which is to love us so much. But could that Heart be more humble than He has made it? Could He go down deeper in self-abasement to prove His love for us? And can we refuse to listen to this first lesson, when He enforces it by such an example? Nay, He has not yet spoken a single word; He has not yet opened His lips to teach us by precepts; He begins by example alone, and by an example which will forever remain one of unsurpassed and unapproachable humility. But this mystery is too deep for words. Our souls may sink into its awful

depths, lose themselves in its boundless expanse; they may feel the pressure of its ineffable power as it overwhelms them. We may not hope to reach its lowest hiding-places, or to land on its utmost shores. But we, who are nothing, can learn humility from the Heart of Jesus, annihilated for love of us in the mystery of the Incarnation.

It may have been in the glorious days of David or of Solomon, when Judea was the garden of the world, and her people the happiest of nations, that some wealthy inhabitant of Bethlehem resolved to prepare a comfortable shelter for his increasing flocks and herds, and built a stable just outside the city gate. He little thought who would one day find an abode and a poor shelter under its roof. But God looked down from heaven upon that home of dumb beasts, and He knew that His own and only-begotten Son would have it as the place of His birth. He, whose humble Heart was to love us so exceedingly, looked down upon His future home and smiled upon the crib on which His Heart would one day begin to throb for

us. But that day was yet far away, and that home of beasts, though poor and cheerless enough, was as yet far too noble to be His birthplace, whose wise love for us told Him that His example alone could teach us to be humble. But time and decay begin to tell upon the stable of Bethlehem; the storms of many winters have battered it; the neglect and rudeness of boorish shepherds have hastened the work of demolition. And ever and anon, He that had chosen it as His palace, looked down upon it, to see whether it was now ready for His coming. "Not poor enough yet," He said; and other storms were bidden to make rents in its roof. "Not mean enough yet;" and another stone would crumble from its ancient walls. "Not yet ruinous enough to be the abode of that ineffably humble Heart." And behold! at last, it is reduced to such a condition, that even the beasts of the field avoid it and prefer the shelter of the cold sky of winter. Now it is ready for the Son of the Most High. Now He looks down upon it with delight, and prepares to take possession of

His abode. For Him and for His lowly parents, there is no room in the inns of Bethlehem. He is turned away from the inhospitable doors of His own people. And all this is His own choice. He has fixed upon that unroofed and crumbling stable as His dwelling-place, and upon the manger and straw as His only couch at His birth. "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this Word which is made known to us." There we shall find Him who has come to be a Saviour, because He will teach us to overcome the pride which caused all our woes. Many children may have been born, like Him, in utter destitution, in places not more comfortable nor better furnished than this. But in their case, we may say, it was the result of chance or accident; they were unconscious of it; they did not choose it for themselves. Jesus alone, the Son of God, the Saviour of man; Jesus, the meek and humble of Heart, in the wise love with which He loved us, prepared for Himself such a nativity, chose for His birthplace this wretched hovel, with all its shame and all its humble poverty.

He is there because He wishes to be there; because He desires to teach us, by this example, to be humble and to love to be unknown and unhonored. From His manger He preaches humility. All that we see around Him gives out the same lesson. The poor carpenter, whom He has chosen to be His foster-father, is a lesson of humility. The lowly Virgin, whose humility He had regarded, so as to choose her to be His mother, preaches humility. The straw on which He lies, cries out to us: "Learn of Him to be humble of heart." The weak form of infancy, the helplessness to which He is reduced, the tears which dim His first view of our unhappy world, all preach humility, and urge the lesson upon us with invincible persuasion. Shall we ever learn it, if the annihilation of the Incarnation and the sweet lowliness of the Nativity fail to teach it to us? Surely, we cannot expect to find greater humility than this.

But Jesus at Bethlehem is only at the beginning of His career on earth; He has before Him the thirty-three years of His

dwelling among men. These years are all radiant with the light of the same loving humility, all eloquent of the same most necessary lesson. Nazareth is a school of humility no less wonderful than Bethlehem, and the mystery of the Hidden Life is nothing but one long example of humility, a loving device of His eagerness to save us from the evils of pride, and to draw us irresistibly to the humility which He has come to teach us. Let not our faith waver; let us not be scandalized in Him, but firmly believe that the unpretending, modest and simple youth whom we see in the house of Mary, in the workshop of Joseph, in the streets of that insignificant Galilean town, is the very God, the Emmanuel, the promised Messiah. He it is whom the Patriarchs longed for, and the Prophets foretold; the Guide and Teacher of mankind; the Father of the future age; the Author of a better covenant; the Restorer of our fall; the King of Israel; the well-beloved Son of God, in whom are concealed all the treasures of grace, all the power and wisdom and majesty of the Di-

vinity. And yet, what do we behold? A plebeian youth, hardly distinguishable from hundreds of His fellows in that city of His abode. What is His occupation? Not the display of His greatness, nor the manifestation of His power. There is no royalty apparent in Him; no exercise of authority. He has no followers, no servants, no disciples. He gives no commands, no lessons. He proposes no covenant. He assumes no legislation. He works no miracles. He utters no prophecies. But for thirty years He devotes Himself to the humble duties of His lowly household. Thirty years He spends in helping His mother to do the common drudgery of her humble home, or His father in the laborious occupation by which he supports his dependants. The hands that framed the universe now hold the besom and sweep the floor, or grasp some poor tool at the carpenter's bench. Such and numberless similar servile employments fill up the far greater portion of His life, thirty of His three and thirty years! And why is this? Can He need such concealment, such abasement?

Would He have been harmed by such poor glory as men might have given Him? Is this the way to be the light of the world, the guide of men? to make known the truth of God, to establish His kingdom on earth? Will men believe Him to be their promised Redeemer? Will Israel acknowledge Him for its King, if He thus abdicates His dignity and dishonors His royal birthright? Has He no regard for His high destiny, no concern for the great work which He was sent on earth to accomplish? But why ask all these questions? We know that He is all-wise. We know that He is always worthy of endless praise in all that He does. Yes, He is displaying His wisdom; He is giving lessons; He is proposing a new covenant; He is saving and restoring mankind. But He does it in the wise love with which He loves us; by the humility of His Sacred Heart; by the annihilation of Himself, that He may draw our hearts after Him into the abyss of His own humiliations and make us learn of Him to be humble of heart.

From this profound mystery of the Hidden

Life, we can conclude what we should think of those actions which the proud world ridicules in the Saints of God. Men can see no wisdom in the concealment of one's talents or gifts. They call it folly to despise the honors of the world, whether we possess them already or have reason to expect them; to waste our lives in menial services to the poor, whilst we might shine among men as bright ornaments of our race; to leave the pomp and the magnificent pleasures of life and hide ourselves in monasteries or in the wilderness, far from the gay throngs of men, and occupied only in doing the will of God. The world has no praise for such virtue; it cannot appreciate it, it brands it as stupidity, cowardice or folly. But the world has not received the lesson which was so lovingly given. It is as proud as ever and only more inexcusable in its pride for the very grace which it has rejected. But let us be truly wise and wise unto salvation. Let us beware of the spirit of the world, which is the spirit of pride, the spirit of Lucifer, the origin and bitter source of all our sins and miseries. Let

not the wonderful humility of the Hidden Life be wasted upon us, but let it be our model, the object of our life-long imitation.

Think not, however, that the humility of the Sacred Heart ceases with the Hidden Life. Humility brought Jesus down from heaven; humility was born with Him at Bethlehem; humility was His companion in the house of Nazareth. The same humility will accompany Him through all the stages of His public life; humility will preside at His sufferings; humility will triumph with Him in His ignominious death.

And therefore when He enters upon His public career, His first act is one of deep self-abasement; one by which He takes upon Himself before the world the form of a sinner, in which He presents Himself to His holy Precursor, to be by him cleansed in the baptism of water. Therefore, too, when He forms that company of future Apostles, He chooses poor ignorant fishermen as His most favored followers. "He is amongst them, not as one who commands, but as one who serves;" claiming no master's authority, but

governing with a father's mildness and gentleness. The poor are His favorites; the lowly, the outcast, the weak, the little children, the unclean lepers, the despised but humble sinners: such are the objects of His predilection; for them is His compassion, for them His miraculous power, for them His divine forgiveness. Humility shines forth from every page of the Gospel. The first sweet words He addressed to men as their Teacher, are: "Blessed are the poor in spirit," that is, blessed are the humble, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (*Matt.* v. 3.) And as "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," we shall not be surprised if we find humility the frequent subject of His instructions, the moral of His parables, the object of His divine commendation. He bids us not seek the esteem of men; not do our good works so as to be seen by men. He tells us to rejoice when we are reviled and contemned. He warns us that unless we become as little children, we shall not enter into His kingdom. He that is the greatest among His disciples must be as the

least. And when He is requested and urged to reserve high places in His kingdom for two whom He appeared to love with special favor, He tells them that they know not what they ask. "He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted," is the lesson conveyed by more than one of His recorded parables. And whilst He thus teaches humility by word, He continues to enforce it by example. He seeks not His own glory, but the glory of His Father. He works miracles, but He charges the recipients of His favors to let no man know it. And when His fame goes abroad over all the land, He is not elated; when His praises are sounded by the multitudes, His heart is not puffed up. When they would make Him king, He hides Himself on the mountain-tops; and when they cry, "Hosannah to the Son of David," and spread their garments in the way whilst He rides into Jerusalem, He, still humble, and as it were unconscious of their acclamations, weeps over the unhappy city which will perish in its pride after all the examples of humility His loving Heart has given it. Hu-

mility is the magnet which draws forth His miraculous powers. The humble woman who would not venture into His presence, but only touch the hem of His garment, is healed at the touch and receives His praise. The Centurion who declared himself unworthy to receive Him under his roof, brings forth from the Heart of Jesus, not only the desired grace, but an exclamation of wonder at such unwonted humility. The poor publican of the parable, who considers himself too vile to approach the altar, but holds himself at the entrance of the temple, and strikes his breast in humble penitence for his many sins, is declared justified by his humility in the sight of God, whilst the proud virtue of the Pharisee brings upon him a double condemnation. Were we to search the Gospels, we should find many other similar lessons and examples, which together with these we have glanced at, are all resolved into that first of His instructions: "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "Learn of me because I am humble of heart."

But let us pass on to the last scene of His

mortal life, and study the humility of the love of Jesus during the dark days of His passion. Here especially we need all the support of our faith, that we may not turn away from Him, as all others did, save His own most lowly Mother and a few faithful and humble women. He is still our God, still the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the well-beloved Son of God, the crowning glory of the universe; and it is this supreme excellence that makes His humiliation so deep, so mysterious, so overwhelmingly awful to our contemplation. Who can tell how deadly our wound must have been that required such a sacrifice for its cure! But what words will suffice to express the humiliation of Jesus in His passion? Millions of grateful souls have pondered on it during all the years of their lives; millions of eloquent lips have spoken of it; millions of mighty pens have written it: and yet the mystery is as unfathomable as ever. The Prophet, who foresaw this ignominy, cried out to God that no man would believe it when it was told. (*Isaias liii.*) And yet, dreadful as it was, incredible as it appeared, it was all

verified to the letter in Jesus, the meek and humble Saviour of men. The buffets, the spittle, the false testimony, the shameful scourging, the ignominious crown and mantle and sceptre, the unjust condemnation, the cross; all, until the final consummation—a pitiless storm of insult and opprobrium, an immeasurable ocean of bitterness and shame—all was endured without a murmur by Him whose love for us made Him humble of heart, to teach us humility even by such an example. Can anything be conceived that could render His abjection more profound, His ignominy more degrading, His shame more overwhelming? Has not Divine Wisdom itself done all it could do to satisfy, in the humiliations of this Victim, for the pride of those whose sins He has taken upon Himself? But why attempt to explain what goes far beyond all human intelligence? Jesus is humble to the last. Humility has been the companion of His life; it remains with Him in death. The humble shepherds were the first to welcome Him into life; two pilloried thieves are His companions in death, whilst He Himself has been rejected in favor of a convicted assassin!

May we now add, that humility has triumphed with Him on the cross? If we had been present at that scene of supreme annihilation, with the faith that we now have in the Divinity of His Person, and if we had been asked whether it were possible that, after all this, after such a life and such a death, pride should still exist in the heart of man? we should, no doubt, without hesitation, have pronounced it impossible. "No! pride is forever killed. It has died, a loathsome monster, at the foot of that cross. So long as men are gifted with reason, they must recognize their God and Saviour in Him who has thus died for them; and so long as they acknowledge Him as their God, their Model and their Master, they must make it their chief study to resemble Him, their only glory to be despised with Him. Seeing Him upon His cross, they will hasten with their own crosses to the mountain of His shame, that they may be crucified with Him and share in His glorious humiliations." And how sadly we should have erred in this judgment of the future. Look at the world

of to-day; look at what we call, by courtesy, the Christian world; look at those even who are considered sincere and practical Christians. Is pride dead in the world? Is the Christian world animated by the spirit of Christ, ruled by the maxims of the humble Jesus? freed from the pride of life? Are even practical Christians indifferent to honors, insensible to derision, unmoved by the loss of reputation? No! pride is not dead; it lives and reigns to-day as it has always lived since Lucifer gave it birth. It carries its havoc sometimes even into the house of God. But what shall we say when we shall be brought with our pride before the judgment-seat of God? What excuse will save us before Him who has given us such lessons of humility as we have heard, such examples of humility as we have witnessed? It is for us that His Heart was humble, for us that He made humility the inseparable companion of His life. To teach us this most necessary virtue, He has opened to us the Paradise of His Sacred Heart, so that we may be won by His love to the virtue of His Divine predilection.

CHAPTER III.

MEEKNESS AND HUMILITY IN PRACTICE.

“Son, humble thy heart and endure; and in thy humiliation keep patience.” — ECCLE. ii. 2 and 4.

WE have hardly crossed the threshold of the Paradise of the Sacred Heart, and yet we have already come upon two plants of such surpassing loveliness and of such sovereign healing virtue, that we need not regret having been delayed by them; and we may well permit them to detain us a little longer, not only that we may enjoy their refreshing beauty, but also that we may derive from them some lasting profit to our souls. Indeed, it were useless to proceed, before having received the benefit of their healing virtue. We must learn well the first lesson we receive from the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We cannot learn any other until we have thoroughly mastered this.

Humility is the groundwork of all virtue,

the foundation of all spiritual edification. We must not attempt to raise the tower of perfection until we have laid this foundation; else our labor will be vain, and our building will fall in ruins about us long before it reaches its destined height.

In this chapter we place meekness and humility together, because when speaking of practice, it is difficult to separate them. Meekness is the fruit of humility, the exterior, visible effect of the hidden virtue. Meekness is the garb in which humility appears. Humility is the root, buried deep in the earth; the inner portion or heart of the tree. Meekness is the outer part, the leaves, blossoms and fruit. It is that which we first perceive and from it we can trace the root; we know that the root is there, and that all the growth and vigor and beauty and wealth of the lovely plant come from it and are due to it. It is for this reason that meekness precedes humility in the first lesson given us by the loving Heart of Jesus. The effect is seen before the cause; the exterior virtue before the secret source from which it springs. But

for us, the disciples of the Sacred Heart, for us who come, destitute of virtue, to Him from whom we may acquire it, humility must be the first study, because we can never be meek until we are humble; we cannot enjoy the fruit, until we have planted the root and developed it into the tree which will bear the coveted burthen.

There is something indescribably beautiful in the character of the Saints; something irresistibly attractive in the manner of persons whose souls are filled with the Spirit of God. They are so meek, so gentle, so unselfish; there is about them such an atmosphere of peaceful serenity, a halo of soft and delicious cheerfulness, that we cannot help wondering why it is that they are so different from other men; we cannot help thinking that they must be blessed with more than earthly happiness. It is the sweetest repose to be with them, it is refreshment after labor, consolation in sorrow, encouragement in affliction. Their smile is ever cheering, their sympathy is never at fault; they seem to have no sorrows of their own to divert their thoughts.

to themselves, but to hold all their zealous interest, all their soothing compassion, all their active solicitude, entirely at our service, and that with such artless candor and unselfish sincerity, that we feel almost as if we were conferring a favor on them, by pouring our sorrows into their bosoms, and permitting them to wipe our tears away. They are not to be wearied by importunity; not soured by ingratitude; not saddened by failure. We may sometimes think that they are not equally kind and attentive to others as to ourselves; we may happen to be of the favored few, whose position, wealth or influence merits for us that distinguishing affability. It is not so. The true man of God is all to all, ever mild and gentle and compassionate, whether he is frequented by the great ones of the earth, or surrounded by the poor and the ignorant. He does not spurn the ragged beggar, nor the unlettered and unmannered child. He smiles on all alike, he draws all hearts to him, and wins the confidence of all that approach him. What is that hidden charm? What is that wondrous

magic? Whence comes that sweetly irresistible attraction? The Saints are meek and humble of heart; this is their magic and their charm. They have banished from their hearts the unfeeling selfishness which pride engenders; they have schooled their hearts to meekness by endurance. They care not for the honors of earth, nor do they fear its frown. The world cannot harm them, because they care neither for what it can give nor for what it can take away. Their hearts are like the Heart of Jesus; they have learned of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart.

But we too must learn the same lesson; for we have entered the same school and are listening to the same heavenly Teacher. We have been admitted into the same Paradise, and may eat of the same fruit. So far from being forbidden to eat of it, we are invited and urged to partake. Here the history of the ancient Paradise is reversed. There God forbade and Satan commanded to eat. There the inordinate ambition to be like unto God was punished with a fall from the state and

grace which God had bestowed. There the taste of the fruit brought pride, cruelty and death: pride which has ruled the world; cruelty, which, born of pride and jealousy in Cain's bosom, has ever since deluged the earth with blood; death, which crushes with its power all the empty baubles of the pride of man, and sends him, poor and naked, to the punishment which pride deserves. Here, on the contrary, we are commanded to be like to God; for, "whom God foreknew, He also predestined to be made conformable to the image of His Son." (*Rom. viii.*) And this likeness is to be produced in us by the imitation of His examples, by the practice of His virtues. The taste of this fruit brings health and life; it changes cruelty into meekness, pride into humility; it raises us from our fall and restores us to our lost inheritance.

But as meekness is the spontaneous offspring of humility, we need not dwell on the practice of that virtue; and hence, we may here dismiss it and occupy ourselves henceforth with humility alone. This we must strive to acquire by practice, according to

the advice of the wise man : “ Son, humble thy heart and endure ; and in thy humiliation, keep patience.” And here, at the very outset, let us be forewarned that it is no easy task that we are undertaking. Our nature revolts against it with all its power ; and nature must be subdued, nature must die, before we can secure the coveted prize.

The beginning of humility is the knowledge of ourselves, and therefore the contempt of ourselves. We must then be intimately convinced that we are nothing of ourselves ; we have nothing that we can call our own, except our sins, our excesses, our shame. All that we have comes from God, and is left to us only by His sufferance, in spite of our unworthiness. If we had been dealt with according to justice, we should, long since, have been cast away to share in the reprobation of Lucifer, whom we had imitated in his pride. Hence it follows, that whatever ill-treatment we may receive, whatever humiliation we may be subjected to, we shall always be less unhappy than we deserve ; that we have no right to complain of the

injuries we suffer, the insults offered to us, the pains we endure. "I have sinned, and I have not received what I have deserved." (*Job xxxiii. 27.*)

Besides thus knowing ourselves as we are and estimating ourselves accordingly, we must know God, our Sovereign Lord, and remember that all honor and glory belong exclusively to Him. "He has made all things for Himself," and all His creatures must necessarily give Him glory. If, therefore, He has bestowed on us talents and gifts, excellencies of body or mind, endowments of nature or fortune; it is for His glory. Wo to us if we divert any of His treasures to our own use; if we are not ready to return to Him what He has entrusted to us, principal and interest, whenever He may demand our account. Our fate will be that of the wicked servant, who had buried his talent in the earth, and who was cast into exterior darkness. "To God alone be honor and glory for ever and ever." (1 *Tim. i.*) "I will not give my glory to another," says the Lord. (*Is. xlviii.*)

This double knowledge of God and of ourselves, of His infinite greatness and of our infinite baseness, is the foundation of humility. When our souls are fully informed with this knowledge and as it were permeated by it, pride has received a severe blow within us; the ground gives way under it and it totters to its downfall. This is because pride takes for granted that we are something, even independently of God, and here we see that we are nothing and even less than nothing. Our reason alone then makes it evident that pride should have no place within us. Our eyes are opened, our ideas are corrected; we see things as they are, and esteem them as they deserve. Without this light it would be impossible for us to learn humility; and we must be thoroughly enlightened by it, if we would succeed in our undertaking.

And now we are prepared to proceed in our study. The knowledge we have acquired will enable us to make the proper use of the means for acquiring humility which will be at our disposal. These are indicated by the wise man as above quoted:

“endure;” “in humiliations have patience.” Humiliation then is the path that leads to humility; and this path is neither smooth nor pleasant to walk in. But on the use we make of such humiliations as fall to our lot, it depends whether we shall be humble and meek like the Heart of Jesus and like His Saints, or revengeful and cruel against the source of the humiliation and prouder because we have been humbled. Look at the model before you; see how Jesus, who was humble of heart for your sake, bore the insults, the slanders, the glaring injustices, to say nothing of coldness or indifference or ingratitude, of which He was the object. “Endure” as He did; “humble thy heart” as He did. Be deaf to the clamors of self-love wounded to the quick and crying out that you did not merit such treatment; that this one and that one should have been the last to inflict it upon you; that your reputation is endangered and you must defend it; that your position must be maintained and your authority and credit supported for the good of others. “Endure; humble thy heart.”

Be silent in your own justification, and you will gradually become humble like the Heart of Jesus. This fruit is bitter to the taste; but its effects are most sweet and wholesome. Our Lord's reputation was of more importance than yours; the interests which rested upon His authority were of greater value than any which might suffer by your discredit. Yet He was silent and said never a word. He left His honor in the hands of His Father. "I seek not my own glory, there is One that seeks it and judges" in His own good time. (*Jno. viii.*) He allowed His light to go out in utter darkness, and His life in the most dismal disgrace, that He might enforce by example what He had taught by word when He said: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and speak all that is evil against you." (*Matt. v.*)

Besides thus humbling our heart and enduring the humiliations which come from others, we must likewise endure such as have their origin in ourselves. Your fortune is humble, your station not honorable; your lot in life is cast with those who do not

figure in the world; or you fail in some enterprise; from a higher position, which you are found unfit to hold, you must descend to a lower; you are blamed where you anticipated approval; you have, in a word, not fulfilled the expectations which were formed of you and which you had formed of yourself. Pride will brood over this as the greatest of evils; it will be miserable and inconsolable; surly and full of bitterness. It covets high stations, splendor and display, it dreads nothing so much as the reproach of failure; and therefore when it is kept in an inferior sphere or deposed from a higher, when it has begun to build and been unable to finish the work, it is in a mortal agony of vexation and anguish. Humility, on the contrary, comes down gracefully and gladly from the station which it occupied with regret; it is more contented in a lower grade, because there it finds its own native atmosphere. It is not dejected by want of success, nor abashed by the reproach which it receives. Its serenity is not disturbed; nor is its bosom ruffled with agitation. Is it then

so very strange that blindness should stumble, weakness fall before it reaches the goal? that ignorance should mistake, cowardice tremble and turn back? that human nature should err? that nothing should come to nothing? We are all that—blindness, ignorance, nothing; hence we must expect the natural result of such causes. Are you to be always in the right? Is there no one in the world wiser than you, more enlightened, more prudent, less liable to err? Why then must you have an excuse for every fault? a reason for every misstep? an argument, whether true or false, to prove that you were not in the wrong? Thus, when pride entered into the world, its first manifestation was an excuse for evil done. Adam was not to blame, because “the woman gave him of the tree;” Eve pleaded not guilty and threw the blame on the serpent who deceived her. Yet both were deeply guilty, and their excuses did not save them from the sentence of condemnation.

Here then we have another source of humiliation, and therefore other means for ac-

quiring the great virtue of humility. Let us do what we can to comply with our obligations, not to disappoint the hopes built upon us; let not failure be the result of culpable negligence or sloth. But if, after all our best endeavors, it should please God not to crown us with success, let us not repine, much less accuse others and resort even to falsehood and slander in our own defence. We are eating again of the bitter fruit; but it is gradually transforming our hearts into a resemblance to the humble Heart of Jesus. We are making progress in the science of the Saints; we are laying a solid foundation for the tower of our perfection.

And now let us see how to deal with success and prosperity in our undertakings. In this, pride finds its nourishment, its choice morsels; and the danger to humility is neither slight nor easy to avoid. Here our self-knowledge and the knowledge of what is due to God must be our strongest barrier against the inroads of the enemy. If we can do anything, it is certainly not by our own virtue or power. "Without me," says our Lord,

“you can do nothing.” (*Jno.* xv.) You are learned, eloquent, gifted with power of mind and grace of body; you are courted, flattered, admired. Whatever you undertake succeeds; what you recommend is accepted and approved, and experience confirms the recommendation. You are high in the esteem of men, elevated to a distinguished position; you are blessed with the gifts of fortune, and surrounded by all the splendor and magnificence which befit your station. Nature can desire no more; vanity and self-love are satisfied; and you are in great danger from pride. But beware of attributing to yourself any portion of this good fortune. Remember that from God it came and to God it must return. If much has been given to you, it was given to a beggar at the best, and it will all be required from you again. Be deaf to adulation, callous to admiration, insensible to applause. Give to God what belongs to Him and take to yourself what alone is yours — your secret littlenesses, your conscious deficiencies, your many sins, your natural nothingness. Purify your intention, give glory to God; and when you have done

all you could, still say: "We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which we ought to do." (*Luke xvii.*) "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy Name give glory." (*Ps. cxiii.*)

Vain-glory is the natural attendant upon success. There are some, it is true, of whom it may be said that they are too proud to be vain. They gloat over their honors in secret, they feast their pride upon their own excellence and greatness: but they are too wary to expose themselves to the ridicule which vanity brings upon itself. These are the strong-minded proud ones. Let us hope that they are few in number; because their pride is more satan-like than that of others. In general, men are too weak to conceal the satisfaction which success gives them. We are fond of ostentation; we love to rehearse our exploits, to display our trophies, to point out our merits to the notice of others. We can converse for hours, with any one who will listen to us, on what we did and how we did it; what dangers we foresaw, and how skilfully we avoided them; what hardships we underwent, what obstacles we surmounted.

We can never forget what honors were bestowed on us; what signal marks of favor we received from great personages; what encomiums were written, what compliments addressed to us, what tokens of confidence, gratitude and veneration were lavished. Poor human nature! And what is the value of all this? What does it weigh in the scales of God's judgment? *Quid hoc ad vitam æternam?* Of what avail is it for eternity? Vanity of vanities; empty shadows; painted nothings; that is what it amounts to.

If then we desire sincerely to become humble like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we must mortify our vanity and not indulge in vain-glory. What we have done was done for God alone and for the increase of His glory. There let it rest. It is written in the book of life, and our reward will come to us in due time. Meanwhile there is work enough to be done for the same good cause to take up all our time and all our attention. We have no leisure to look back at the past or the good that belongs to it. We must hasten forward; for, the way is long and the day is declining. "Forgetting the things

that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark," (*Phil. iii.*,) says the great Apostle who had done so much for God; and we should imitate him in this and thus escape the danger to which success would otherwise expose us. Let us forget ourselves, speak little of ourselves, and faithfully deposit at the feet of our Lord all the treasures we gain, all the crowns which are placed on our brows. "To God alone be honor and glory."

We have thus passed in review some of the principal means for the acquisition of the first virtue which the Sacred Heart proposes to us. We have seen that the painful path of humiliation is the only one by which we can reach humility; and, as we can neither pursue our course in the Paradise of God, to view its remaining beauties and taste its other fruits, nor even be permitted to linger within its happy enclosure, unless we are humble of heart: let us hope that our resolution is taken and firmly fixed: we will submit to humiliation for the sake of humility: the pearl is of sufficient value to warrant the expense. We will then "humble our hearts

and endure," and when an occasion of humiliation is presented, we will "keep patience." If we are generous, and disposed to be large-hearted with God, we will not be satisfied with waiting for such occasions as may occur; but we will seek for them ourselves, we will go to meet them as they approach; we will embrace them with joy. We may even be disgusted with the vanities of the world, throw aside its yoke, put on the livery of our Lord and go to live with Him in humble poverty and obscurity and labor in the Nazareth of Religion. And thus we shall sooner be humble and more perfectly humble: the foundation of our edifice will be deeper and stronger, and the tower of our sanctity will reach a greater elevation.

For our encouragement and support in the practice of this difficult virtue, let us remember that there is "an immense weight of true and lasting glory" awaiting us in heaven, where pride cannot rob us of it nor vanity destroy it. The desire of excellence was given us by our Creator, and as He planted it in our souls, He must have provided for

its fulfilment. It is the inordinate desire alone that is criminal and vicious. But since we are a fallen race, since we strayed from God through the path of pride, we must return to Him by the path of humiliation, we must suffer the penalty of our fall, and merit, by our similarity to Him in whom alone there is plentiful redemption, our restoration to the dignity of children of God. It is on this account that our life is beset with trials, that the service of God is an unceasing struggle against nature. Our home is not here, nor is our triumph in this world. But when life has been spent in the humble imitation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; when the struggle against nature is terminated by the death of nature; when the work is finished which God has given us to do; when we have glorified Him, as His Divine Son had glorified Him: then God will glorify us as He glorified His first-born; then the desire of excellence which we feel in our souls will find its full gratification. We shall be crowned with glory among the saints of God, and shall shine as stars for all eternity; we shall reign with Christ for evermore.

CHAPTER IV.

OBEDIENCE.

Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: then I said: behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it and thy law in the midst of my heart.—Ps. xxxix.

THE fair garden into which we have been admitted has now displayed before us two of its admirable and most salutary plants: humility and meekness. These are the two sentinel shrubs, lowly but most beautiful, placed near the entrance of the sacred region; their heavenly freshness and their enrapturing loveliness make us forget the earthly and perishable beauties which may have hitherto captivated our hearts, whilst the divine efficacy of their fruit heals the wounds which we may have brought along from the battle-fields of the world, and gives us strength to continue our delightful wanderings in this mysteriously and unspeakably blissful Paradise. When, therefore, we have

tasted of that sweetly bitter fruit, when we have learned to be meek and humble of heart, we may step forward without fear, and plunge into the sacred groves, lose ourselves in the bewildering labyrinths, wander amid the varied flowers and be inebriated with their un-earthly fragrances. The air is loaded with the odors of heaven. The branches of the trees bend down with the fruits of Paradise, and seem to reach them to us and invite us to pluck them as we pass. We advance with a cautious, reverential step, for, we feel that we are treading on sacred soil, and as if, at every turn in the meandering pathway, we might meet, face to face, the Divine Presence whose abode we know is in this garden of delights.

The next rich ornament of the Paradise of God, or, to drop the allegory, the next virtue of the Sacred Heart which we are to consider, is Obedience. This virtue is allied to humility, and so closely allied, that the one cannot exist without the other. He who is not humble, will never be obedient; and he who is truly obedient must be humble. Here we

already begin to see how true it is that humility is the foundation of virtue; that we must learn that virtue well before we can proceed in our study of the Sacred Heart.

Obedience, according to St. Thomas, is a moral virtue which makes our will prompt to do the will of another in whom, as our superior, we acknowledge the authority of God. The Angelic Doctor declares it to be the highest, the most precious of all the moral virtues, because it offers to God the highest and best gifts of our nature. It is a most necessary virtue too; since, without it, there can be no peace or happiness, no spiritual life or progress; just as in the physical world, there would be, first, a total stagnation, and speedily a total wreck, if the inferior bodies, influences or forces were not obedient to those which are above them.

There is order in nature, there is teeming life; and there is happiness in the abodes of men. The spring produces its blossoms, the harvest its abundance of food and enjoyment. The shades of night wrap the wearied laborer in sleep to restore his strength; the glorious

sunrise awakens the husbandman to his toil, the birds to their warblings, the whole earth to fresh vigor and increase of life. Because the laws remain undisturbed which regulate the movements of the heavens and the rotation of the earth; each body or globe holds the post assigned to it and pursues its appointed path in the immensity of space, subject and subordinate to the one immediately above it, and all of them wisely submissive to one supreme mover, and gracefully circling around one common centre. Let but one of the countless portions of the system leave its orbit for a single moment; let the subordination of the lower spheres to the higher be disturbed for one instant; and there will be a crash, a ruin, which will reduce the bright creation into a chaos in which all order and beauty, all life and happiness will be forever destroyed.

The Author of this natural order which preserves the material world, is also the author of a moral order among His rational and spiritual creatures, and the one is, in many ways, an image of the other. The

necessity of subordination in nature shows the same necessity in man: the ruin, which would inevitably result from a violation of order in nature, indicates the sad effects of a similar disorder in the soul of man, and proves the necessity of obedience to the authority vested, by the decree of God, in those whom He has made superior to others. The Apostle tells us that "there is no power but from God; he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation." (*Rom. xiii.*) The principle then on which obedience rests, the source of its binding force on man's conscience, is the sovereignty of God, a sovereignty which belongs to Him by nature, by creation, by preservation; a sovereignty which He cannot abdicate, and to which all creatures must inevitably do homage, whether they will it or not. He therefore who refuses obedience to an authority derived from God, is a rebel to the inalienable sovereignty of God; he rises, Satan-like, against his liege Lord; he arms himself against the King of Heaven and

madly proposes to dethrone God. This is strong language, but it is merely putting in other words what our Lord Himself said: "He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me." (*Luke x.*)

But let this suffice to establish the value of obedience, its necessity for all those who aim at satisfying the claims of their Creator upon them and thus meriting His divine approval and His eternal recompense. Let it suffice also to give us an earnest desire to learn this most necessary virtue from the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Heavenly Master into whose school we have entered to acquire the science of the saints.

Let us then study the obedience of the Sacred Heart, since it has been pleased to give us examples of it and thus induce us to practise it with less difficulty. It is again the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for us which makes it obedient; it is His love which makes Him go before us that we may follow Him in a painful path. Like a tender mother, He takes the bitter draught first and smiles

as He takes it, as if it were sweet to His palate, to encourage our weakness and overcome our repugnance. Like the eagle, He takes us on His wings and teaches us to soar aloft, far above the dark earth, into our native element, where the golden sunlight never sets and is never obscured. It is the same wise love which made Him meek and humble to repair the ruin caused by pride and cruel selfishness, which now makes Him obedient to restore the peace and harmony between us and our God, which disobedience and rebellion had destroyed.

There was war between heaven and earth; the gates were closed, and on the battlements of heaven there stood, day and night, in serene but awful anger, an army of angel soldiery, clad in the fiery mail of the divine indignation and armed with the flaming swords of God's vengeance against sin. Generation after generation of the rebellious children of men passed upward from the gloomy earth, the souls, by an impulse of their spiritual essence, pressing aloft to mingle with the source from which they had

sprung. But the golden portals remained closed against them; the serenely but awfully angry sentinels warned them away from that abode of spotless sanctity, and the flaming swords of God's vengeance pursued their lingering flight to the prison-houses in which they were to be confined. On earth, mankind felt its wounds and was sensible of its fall. There was a faint glimmering of hope, that one day peace would be restored; and all the spiritual nature of man, darkened though it was and earth-bound by the weight of its guilt, was yet tinged with that faint ray and appeared to struggle upward against the burthen which oppressed it. In pagan rites as well as in the sacrifices offered to the true God, though fainter far in those than in these, we see traces of the endeavors of mankind, if not to pacify an injured Divinity, at least to keep alive the hope that a victim, more worthy than any which they could offer, would yet be found to effect their reconciliation with heaven. Yet, the efforts were fruitless; the victims were not accepted; God was unappeased; mankind remained unredeemed.

But in the centre of light, whence had proceeded that faint ray of hope which still lingered on earth; in the bosom of the Eternal Father, there burned, with intensest glow, a compassionate love for the fallen race; an almost impatient love, which seemed to long for the appointed moment when it might burst forth and envelop in its flames the long expected victim of expiation. And when that moment came at last, there went forth a voice from that burning centre, and its words sounded with a divinely sweet melody through the vaults of heaven: "Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: then I said: Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will. O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart. The peace-offerings of guilty man, his holocausts and his incense have been inadequate, and would forever continue to be inadequate, to satisfy for his rebellion. But as his fall was the effect of pride and disobedience, behold I come to repair it by my obedience. Thy will, which he despised, it shall be my first and my constant care to revere

and fulfil : obedience to thy law shall reign in the midst of my Heart."

Yes, His Heart will be obedient for us; His Heart will teach us how to obey, and thus at once pay the forfeit of our rebellion and enable us to share in the fruits of His redemption. And indeed, what was His whole life on earth but an act of obedience? Follow Him from the cradle to the tomb, and it is the path obedience that you have traced. What is the history of His three and thirty years in the gospel, but the obedient fulfilment in His person of whatever had been mirrored of Him in the law and the Prophets? That law, the expression of God's will, was in His Heart, as though it were the life of His Heart, the soul of His entire being. It certainly was the guide of His actions, the lamp by whose light He walked. Whatever has been written of Him, He accomplishes to the letter. Every prophecy He fulfils; every type and figure He verifies in His own person. His path through life, from His first faint cry of helplessness at Bethlehem to his last breath on Calvary, leads through a long

series of painful labors faithfully performed, of bitter persecutions patiently borne, of manifold sorrows meekly endured, in obedience to the decree of God; until all the sacrifices have been accomplished, all the work assigned to Him completed, so that He may truly exclaim with that last breath of His: "It is consummated!" What was written of Him at the head of the book, is written again on its every page, down to the very end. He has done Thy will, O God, and Thy law was at all times in the midst of His heart. Truly has He said: "I do always the things that please him." (*John* x.) "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." (*Matt.* xi.)

But this obedience to the law of His Eternal Father was not the only obedience which He practised for our sake; or rather, this view of His entire life as one long act of submission to the will of God, is not the only view in which we should consider it, so as to derive from His example the full benefit which may come to us from it. For surely no rational mind can refuse submission to

the will of God. However faithless we may be in practice, we can never deny the principle that God, as our Creator, is our Master; and as our Master, He has a necessary claim to our obedience. We are not generally so rash as openly to rebel against the authority of God and declare our entire independence of Him. The difficulty lies in obedience to our fellow-men whom God has placed over us and who share His authority, His sovereignty in our regard; and to teach us this obedience to God, which is mediate and indirect, and therefore repugnant to our proud hearts, the Sacred Heart of Jesus would go before us in its observance; and, as usual, His love for us knows no bounds, sets no limits to the extent of its obedience. In this, as in all the rest, He loses sight of Himself to think only of us, and to bestow on us a more copious redemption. Hence, He subjects Himself to His own creatures, and in so doing, He takes upon Himself a part which, by nature, can never be His. For, who is He? How can He obey? Obedience is the duty of inferiors; but He is not, can-

not be an inferior. By nature He is above all. It requires then a miracle of divine power, the union of two incompatible and essentially contradictory qualities to make it possible for Him to obey. But He works the wonder; He does not hesitate at the strangeness of the result. He will be God, and yet obedient; Supreme Lord and Lawgiver, and yet subject not only to His own laws, but to the lowest and meanest of men; and so subject as no earthly slave ever was or could be. Among men, obedience is proper and intelligible enough — because it is supposed to be exercised by the young towards the old; by the ignorant towards those who are wise; by the weak towards the strong; by the subject towards those in whose hands God has placed power. Order is a law of nature. Men are not all equal in all respects, and hence it is just that some should be subject to others. If all had equal rights in all things, equal power, equal jurisdiction; if all were masters and none were servants, all rulers and none to obey, all kings and no subjects, the whole world

would stand still; nothing could be done. There would be a Babel of confused commands; a universal rebellion of children against parents, wives against husbands, scholars against masters. Men would cease to be social beings. Society would be dissolved into individualism, and every man's hand would be raised against his brother. Hence, obedience of man to his superior is indispensable to his own preservation as well as to the general good. But obedience in our Divine Lord to man, His creature, reverses the order. In Him, God obeys man; the Creator is subject to His own creature; the King descends below the slave. The wise asks wisdom from the foolish; the powerful is powerless against the weak; the Master learns from His own disciples. Infinite greatness, wisdom, power, is ruled and governed by what, in comparison with Him, is infinite littleness, ignorance and weakness. It is true that Joseph and Mary are most dear to Him, most magnificently adorned with grace and sanctity, exalted in gifts of mind and heart far above Principality and

Power; yet they are infinitely inferior to Him. But Jesus obeys His parents, because in them He recognizes the authority of His Eternal Father, "of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named." (*Eph. iii.*) To them He offers the holocaust of His will, and through them to God, His Father. And such is His earnestness to teach us obedience by His example, such the importance He attaches to this virtue, that nearly the whole of His life on earth is written in three words: "*Erat subditus illis*: He was subject to them." (*Luke ii.*) His divine wisdom thought that three words would suffice for the history of thirty years of that life: but nothing less than divine wisdom could have thought so. It was the divine wisdom of the Sacred Heart, the wise love of the Sacred Heart, which would by this means teach us obedience, whilst it was, at the same time, atoning for our rebellion. Thirty years of a God's life in the simple words: "He was subject to His parents." Our whole attention is centred on that single virtue. He did nothing during all those wonderful years but obey. The heavenly bodies

moved at His beck; the seasons came and went at His bidding; the earth was clad with circling plenty with the changing seasons; men and animals lived and died at His command; all creation was clasped in His hand and was governed and sustained by His will during all those thirty years, as it had been ever since He had called it into existence. But all that is buried in silence, passed by, as if it were not worth the mention. One word alone is recorded, and it is recorded for our good: it is, OBEDIENCE; the obedience of God to His creatures for love of us.

Nor is He obedient only to Joseph and Mary, whose peerless sanctity might in some measure have reconciled Him to the task, and whose gentle rule over Him was exercised with such fearfully humble reverence for His Divine Person. He subjects Himself to all who choose to command His services, harsh and heartless though they may be, loaded with the guilt of an ill-spent life, and therefore objects of abhorrence to His most pure eyes. He is subject to them also with the same perfect and cheerful obedi-

ence; because in them too he acknowledges the authority of God. How often, during those laborious years of His hidden life, was He employed with His foster-father, by the rude Nazarenes, receiving their orders, roughly spoken, no doubt, as to a poor, unskilful apprentice; listening to their directions, haughtily and imperiously dictated, and, during the progress of the work and at its completion, hearing their unkind judgments, their bitter reproaches, perhaps the unjust denial of His little, hard-earned pittance. His Holy Father's will thus came to Him in many a hideous disguise; but He recognized it in all, He adored it in whatever shape it appeared; He fulfilled it with the same meek and cheerful fidelity. O what a heart is the Heart of Jesus! What an abyss of wonderful subjection! In the midst of it is the law of God, the will of His Heavenly Father. He never resists, never rebels; He makes no claim of His own inherent rights; He suggests no devices of His own; He follows not His own wisdom, which would have astonished mankind by its works; He

exerts not His own power, which would have made all creatures pliant to His mere desire. He does what He is told, how He is told, when, where and how long. He does not omit one tittle; He does not change one iota; He does not fail for one moment. O wonderful Heart! Who will ever fathom the depth of the mysteries concealed in thee? Who will ever understand the nature, the extent, the value, the merit of thy obedience? Go into this interminable labyrinth, Christian soul; wander about in those thirty years of mysterious concealment. It is a region of deepest wonder, but full of loveliness; the very heart of this Paradise of God: yet all its beauty, all its wealth, all its varied sweets, are told in one word: obedience. It is, moreover, a region of the calmest and most delightful happiness; because the will of God, which reigns there with supreme and unquestioned sway, is at all times amiable, adorably compassionate, most tenderly paternal in its rule: and it is this will alone that the Heart of Jesus sees in those whom it obeys. It hears always the fatherly voice of God in

whatever is imposed by obedience; it submits to one and the same divine wisdom and power in the performance of every duty. There is then a constant, undisturbed peace and serenity, a cloudless joyousness, a fearless tranquillity. Come what may, it is God's will, and His law is the delight of that Heart at all times and under all circumstances. The sunshine of that divine submission gilds the darkest sky and fringes the stormiest clouds with its own pure, soft, hopeful, and blissful glory. It is a perpetual rainbow which tells of God's smiles upon the obedience of His Son; of the approving light of the divine countenance which beamed through the darkness of the hidden life, and which will ever beam through the pitiless storm of injustice, oppression, persecution unto death, to which the love of Jesus will submit for our sake, in obedience to that law which is in the midst of His Heart.

The obedience of the Sacred Heart does not cease with the hidden life of our Lord. Had human wisdom been called into his council, it would, no doubt, have suggested

the propriety of now, at least, laying aside every appearance of weakness and poverty and lowliness; it would have urged the important ends of the Incarnation: the manifestation of God's truth to erring men, the establishment of God's kingdom on earth; it would have alleged the inherent dignity of the Divine Person, who had deigned to honor the fallen world with His presence; and these would have seemed more than sufficient arguments for His taking upon Himself the outward majesty and glory which would have subjected the minds of all men to His dominion, and bound their hearts to His service. And human wisdom would have spoken well, according to its light. But, happily for us, the Sacred Heart followed only the impulse of its own love for us, and, to teach us obedience, continued its own obedience to the end, and, instead of lessening it, increased it, deepened its wonder and its power, as well as its merit, until it disappears at last in the infinite abyss of obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. The birth of Jesus had been an act

of obedience to the proud decree of Augustus, ordering all his subjects to be enrolled in the cities of their origin; his death was to be an act of obedience to the iniquitous sentence of the Pagan Governor of Judea; and between these two acts of obedience there is an unbroken series of similar acts, an entire life spent in perfect submissiveness to all authority, whether lawful or usurped, justly or unjustly exercised, mildly or tyrannically exerted, wisely or unwisely ruling, so long as compliance with it did not involve an open transgression of that higher and more sacred law, the will of God, which reigned supreme in His Heart.

Surely, there was tyranny enough, in the rulers of His day, to merit even then all the abhorrence of His gentle Heart, and to receive, in due time, the eternal reprobation which His justice was to decree against it when brought to His tribunal. Fathers held an iron sceptre over their children, masters over their slaves, husbands over their wives; whilst the kings of the nations disposed, with absolute and arbitrary sway, of the

property and lives of their subjects, with no other restraint than their own caprice and the impulses of the fickle passions of their own corrupt hearts. The Heart of Jesus knew all this, fathomed all its enormity, and felt all the bitterness of this injustice and oppression. But is there a single word of resistance? a single act of insubordination? a single sentiment or word of His which might be thought to preach sedition? True, He was accused of stirring up the people, of forming a party in His own interest, of aiming at the crown, of refusing to pay tribute to the emperor. But His accusers, His judges, and all the world knew that the charge was false. He had openly declared that what was due to Cæsar must be given Him; He had paid His tribute, though a miracle was required to supply the means; He had fled to the mountains from those who would make Him king; He had said: "Upon the chair of Moses have sitten the Scribes and the Pharisees: all, therefore, that they shall say to you, observe and do it," (*Matt.* xxiii.) thus requiring obedience to the com-

mands of those whose souls were full of guile. All the jealousy of the Pharisees, all the malice of the Scribes, all the sleepless vigilance of envious Priests and Levites, could never find, in all His conduct, one real infringement of the divine or human law; and when, at last, their hour was come, and the power of darkness was to be permitted to prevail for a season, false witnesses, popular outcries, and threats of Cæsar's displeasure were the only means left them to accomplish the ruin of their detested rival.

But there was no rebellion in the Heart of Jesus, even against this intolerable injustice. He is led like a lamb to the slaughter; He stands humble and silent before His judges; He submits without a murmur to the indignities heaped upon Him by the rabble and by the soldiers of the High Priest; He bears the contempt of Herod and his army, as if all this were due to Him; He suffers the stripes and the thorns, though condemned to the former after a solemn declaration of His innocence, and enduring the latter from the mere caprice of His brutal

tormentors. Like the obedient Isaac, He carries on His shoulders the wood of His sacrifice; at the word of His executioners, He lays Himself meekly on His cross and stretches out His hands and His feet to be nailed to His dreadful death-bed. No angel's hand stays the arm uplifted to strike Him; no voice from heaven saves His obedience from death. His sacrifice must be completed; His obedience must be to the end, because He is to love us to the end, and to forget Himself to think only of us to the end; till even His love can devise nothing more to prove its intensity, its sincerity in the abundance of its redemption.

And here, whilst we contemplate this holocaust of obedience, let us listen to the words of the Apostle, who says of Him: "Whereas He was the Son of God, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became to those who obey Him, a cause of eternal salvation." (*Hebr. v.*) It is a bold saying; "The Son of God *learned* obedience." He in whom all that is good and holy subsisted in its entire

perfection, all virtue and sanctity in their highest possible degree, can hardly be supposed to have needed to learn obedience. Yet He learned it, and learned it by suffering the most unjustly inflicted torments, by being subjected to the most trying abuse of power and authority. And this may comfort and encourage us in our struggle with our rebellious hearts, when we find that after years of painful efforts, we are still far from having learned obedience; nay, it seems that the longer we practise the lesson, the more difficult it becomes. What wonder that we should fall short of perfection, when even He had to learn this lesson to the last hour of His life? But He reached that perfection of obedience for us, that we might not lose heart, but continue our endeavors to bend our stubborn minds and our repugnant wills to the authority which God has given others over us. It is thus that the obedience of the Sacred Heart becomes to us a cause of eternal salvation; because when its love has conquered our hearts, and made them subject to itself, it infuses its own spirit of placid,

calm, uncomplaining obedience into them; the wound of our rebellion is healed; the peace is restored between our hearts and our God, and the lost inheritance is given back to us among the citizens of heaven.

And now that we have contemplated the obedience of the Sacred Heart, and have listened to the lessons which it has been pleased to have recorded for our benefit in the gospels, we shall not be surprised to find the same virtue inculcated by those into whose hearts the Spirit of the Sacred Heart was most abundantly poured out. The Apostles, who had drunk at the fountain-head of heavenly wisdom, and who were to be the channels through which the "copious redemption" was to be transmitted to us, give us many a lesson of obedience. We have already heard St. Paul threatening damnation to those who would "resist the powers ordained of God." There is not a single epistle left us by the same Apostle in which he does not insist on the duty of obedience. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers." "Be subject of necessity, not only for wrath,

but also for conscience's sake." (*Rom. xiii.*)
"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is just." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, as to Christ."
"Let women be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord." (*Ephes v. and vi; Colos. iii.*)
"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death." (*Phil. ii.*) "We beseech you that as you have received of us, so also you would walk, for you know what precepts I have given to you. Therefore, he that despiseth these things, despiseth not man, but God." (*1 Thess. iv.*) "We have confidence in you, that the things which we command, you both do and will do. And if any man obey not our word, note that man." (*2 Thess. iii.*) "Whoever are servants, let them count their masters worthy of all honor." (*1 Tim. vi.*) "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters in all things. Admonish all to be subject to princes and powers, and to obey at a word; to be ready to every good work." (*Tit. ii. and iii.*)

“Obey your prelates and be subject to them. For they watch as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy and not with grief. And may the God of peace fit you in all goodness, that you may do His will.” (*Heb. xiii.*) St. Peter is not less earnest in recommending the same virtue, and he expressly bids us (*1 Pet. ii.*) be subject to all our superiors, “not only to the good and gentle,” who will not abuse their power, “but also to the froward,” who may tyrannize over us and make their rule a heavy burthen. God has His own wise purposes in subjecting us, at times, to harsh and cruel masters. It becomes us not to question His Providence; but so long as we are not commanded to do what God forbids, we must submit to the authority which God has placed over us. We have strayed from God by disobedience: we must return to Him by the path of obedience, a painful path, not without its thorns to wound our feet as we advance. We too must learn obedience by suffering, as our Model learned it, and when we have mastered this lesson, we shall have

reached the height of perfection to which we are destined. For "obedience plants all other virtues in the soul, and preserves them when once planted," say both St. Gregory and St. Bernard. And the Church, which is the living power through which our fallen nature is to be raised again and restored to its pristine glory, gives us a life of obedience as the noblest in its perfection, the most secure, the most expeditious means of increasing in every virtue, the most abundantly blessed with every heavenly grace.

The holy writers of the Church, her great Doctors and Fathers, seem unable to find words to express their thoughts on obedience, their idea of its greatness, its merits, its beauty, and the favor with which Heaven regards it. They compare its merit to that of martyrdom. They equal its grace to that of baptism; so that the sacrifice of our will through obedience is so precious in the sight of God, that if the soul of a Religious man were to burst its bonds when it has just spoken, at the foot of the altar, its holy vow, by which it becomes a holocaust to God, it

would fly at once from the flames of its sacrifice on earth to the bosom of God. St. John Climacus says, that "obedience is a voluntary death; it is the tomb of our own will; it is a life without solicitude; a danger without fear; a plea which God cannot reject; it is a navigation free from storms; a journey made without fatigue; it is a substitute for discretion; it puts our burthen on another's shoulders." We may say, without fear of contradiction, that obedience is the restorer of mankind. Whether we consider our relations to God, to our fellow-men, or to ourselves; whether we consider our social, moral, civil, or individual condition, we shall find that all the evils to which each of these conditions is subject, all the disorders which disturb those relations and produce discord and unhappiness, are the sad consequences of rebellion against authority. Had the will of God remained the fixed and recognized centre around which all created wills would have revolved, and to which they would have invariably tended, the world would have remained in its primitive beauty, and retained

its primitive bliss unimpaired. Paradise would still be the abode of mankind. There would have been no war between heaven and earth. Men would have lived in unbroken peace among themselves. No tyrant would ever have crushed his abject slaves into the dust. No outraged people would have risen against its ruler. No brother's hand would have been lifted against a brother. No human blood would have reddened the earth. No tears would have been shed in sorrow. Because the will of God, being the rule of all other wills, would have guided them all in harmony, and there could have been no jarring or clashing among the subjects where all were obedient to the same infinitely wise and infinitely holy rule. But when the will of man left its prescribed course, and turned away from its proper centre, disorder was inevitable in his entire nature. The principle of authority was attacked in its highest and most sacred seat, the sovereignty of God over his creatures, and when it had been disregarded and rejected there, it could not be secure in other and less sacred abodes. If

man is not subject to God, much less will he be subject to man. Hence, rebellion soon broke down every barrier which authority had erected; and where God had not been obeyed, neither princes nor parents, neither secular nor ecclesiastical superiors could stem the tide of revolt. Interest may, for a time, restrain the other passions of the heart; force may, for a season, beat down the upheavings of the tumultuous masses. But the principle of authority is fallen; man acknowledges no superior but his own will. He has seen his guides, his princes, his teachers trample upon the law of God, and has learned from them to do the same; and he soon turns against his rulers the weapons which they have put into his hands. He spurns all control; he bursts every bond; he sweeps away, one after another, all laws which he finds weakened by their separation from the principle of authority. And, thus, disobedience always brings its own punishment along with it. He that rebels against his lawful superiors, will be rebelled against by his own lawful subjects. We know how temporal

sovereigns have expiated their rebellion against the Church. Throne after throne was overturned by the same engines which they had erected and directed against the Church. And now, from seat to seat, the principle of authority has been driven, until it hardly finds a dwelling-place on earth outside the Church. The deluge of revolution has risen above every height, and the Ark alone remains, borne upon the breast of that deluge, and bearing in its bosom the hope of the coming generation, the germ of the better future. Restore the principle of authority to its everlasting centre, recognize it in God and in God's representative on earth, His Church, and the olive-branch of peace will soon be a token that the deluge has subsided; the fair rainbow will be a promise of better and happier days. "*Et nunc, reges, intelligite; erudimini qui judicatis terram.* And now, O ye Kings, understand; receive instruction, you that judge the earth." (*Ps.ii.10.*)

But it is not likely that the rulers of the earth will heed our warning. They have been deaf to a mightier voice than ours, one which

has been frequently raised to make known to them the coming and inevitable danger: the voice of those whom God had placed as sentinels on the watch-towers of Sion, and who, from their elevated position, and with the aid of the divine Wisdom which had raised them to it, clearly perceived the gathering storm, and warned both kings and people to shelter themselves against its fury. But “man, when he is come into the depths of sin, contemneth: ignominy and reproach follow him.” (*Prov.* xviii. 3.)

Let us, then, leave them to their fate, and return to ourselves who have come into the Paradise of the Sacred Heart, to feast upon its blessed and salutary fruits. We must apply to ourselves what we have learned; we must make our hearts obedient like the Heart of Jesus. Obedience is the mother of virtues; it is the queen of all the moral virtues, and this sufficiently indicates that it is the most difficult of them to acquire and to practise; and, indeed, it is true to say, that no virtue is more rarely met with in perfection.

So long as the will and judgment of our superiors agree with our own ; so long as we are commanded to do what we ourselves would choose to do, there is no great difficulty in obeying. And, in theory, the obedience which bends our will to that of a superior, and blinds our judgment to make it see only with the light of another, whom God has placed over us and made the depository of His own power and wisdom in our regard, is most just, most reasonable, and, therefore, most beautiful and most delightful. For, what can be more just than that we should be subject to God ? What more reasonable than that we should reject our own wisdom when it is opposed to the wisdom of God ? What more beautiful than the order which this subjection produces and preserves ? What more delightful than the assurance that we are doing God's will under the smiles of God's complacency ? It is this which renders the life of obedience so noble, so holy, so desirable ; since it gives us the greatest and the truest liberty, which consists in willing to do only what is worthy of us, the will

of God, and makes our hearts so calmly happy, by the certainty that obedience is the path on which the golden light of heaven rests to guide our steps without danger of straying. But when the sacrifice is demanded of ourselves; when the practice of this so just and reasonable, so beautiful and delightful obedience comes to our own doors; when something on which we have set our hearts is refused, or we are bid to do what our own judgment does not approve, or to do it in a manner which our wisdom and experience condemn; oh, how our very souls rebel with all their powers against the command or the decision of our superior! How we plead and urge; how we ply objections and excuses; how our heart sinks within us when neither entreaty nor excuse avails; how deeply we are wounded, and how long the wound rankles in our bosom; how loudly we sometimes complain of what has been enjoined us; how apt we are to seek comfort from others by pouring out to them the bitterness of our souls; how ready to ascribe some sinister motive as the cause of the command, some

groundless suspicion, some false accusation, some secret jealousy! Where is now the excellence, the beauty of obedience? What has become of those high thoughts of self-sacrifice, of heroic immolation of our own will and judgment on the altar of obedience? Where now that true and perfect liberty with which obedience was to make us free? No! obedience is not easy. It is an inward martyrdom of the soul, a long, life-long crucifixion of our heart. And, therefore, perfect obedience is seldom found.

Once more, then, we have a bitter fruit to taste; we have a painful struggle to undergo with our own hearts, to make them gradually more like that Heart which, for love of us, was obedient unto death. Let us not lose courage, however, but, with the Heart of Jesus before us, and with the assistance of the grace which it will pour into ours, let us labor earnestly at the task we have undertaken. In order to succeed in acquiring this difficult and precious virtue of obedience, we must, by repeated and serious meditation, lay deep in our minds the foundation on which

it rests, which is, the conviction that God's will should be our guide and our law; that whatever is done contrary to that rule, is done in vain; that this sovereign and all-wise Will is most certainly made known to us by our superiors, whoever they may be; that God directs them in their government; that no command issues from their lips but with His permission and for our good; be they wise and good, or unwise and wicked, they are God's ministers to us unto justice, and their orders are God's own, except when they command what is evidently sinful; that we cannot err in following the voice of obedience, but shall certainly go astray if we refuse its guidance; that God will never lay to our charge what we have done through obedience. But these truths must be made to sink deep into our souls, they must become, as it were, a part of our minds; for then we shall carry them into practice. This foundation of obedience is laid by Faith; for, every one of the principles it contains is derived directly from the truths which Faith teaches. For the practice of obedience, and especially

for its practice in its highest form, Charity is the impelling and sustaining power. "For, this is the charity of God, that we keep His commandments," says St. John; and our Lord Himself had said before him: "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (*Jno.* xiv. 21.) Now, this charity will be given us out of the Sacred Heart, which is the furnace ever burning with that heavenly fire, and ever eager to communicate its flames to our hearts. Can we refuse to obey, after all that the Heart of Jesus has endured to teach us this virtue? Will not the thought, that we can, by imitating his obedience, repay him in some degree for his immense love for us, be sufficient to make the practice of obedience less arduous, less repulsive? Shall we not rather rejoice in proportion to the pain of the sacrifice, since we can thus give Him more signal proofs of our gratitude?

Let, then, this grateful love daily increase in us by means of a constant and tender devotion to the Sacred Heart; and the bitterness of this fruit of our Paradise will be

changed into sweetness. For, when our minds are informed with the principles of faith on which obedience is founded, and our hearts warmed with the charity by which obedience lives and labors; then we shall obey as the Sacred Heart obeyed: promptly, without excuse; cheerfully, without interior repugnance or outward murmur; exactly, without changing an iota of the command; fully, without omitting one tittle of what is required of us; blindly, without regard to the suggestions of our own little wisdom; fearlessly, without the slightest misgiving about the result; constantly, without ever being weary of what we know to be the most holy, most wise, most adorable will of God; obeying perfectly in all things and obeying even unto death, though it were the death of the cross.



CHAPTER V.

PATIENCE.

"Patience hath a perfect work; that you may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing." — 1 JAMES i. 4.

THE obedience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was the subject of our last consideration, may be compared to a majestic tree spreading its branches over a vast area and sheltering under its shadow many shrubs and flowers which prosper and bloom around it. Its huge trunk gives support to creeping vines, which encircle it with their varied hues and adorn its branches with their festive beauty. For, obedience is a virtue which gathers other virtues around it as its attendants and companions. One of these is patience, which is so intimately connected with obedience, that we may call it a part of the same, a necessary ingredient, a component member of obedience itself. Patience is, in some measure, the crown of obedience; because, without patience, there

is no continuance under obedience; there is no lasting obedience. Hence obedience, without patience, fails of its end, of its reward, and, therefore, becomes useless or ceases to exist. "Patience hath a perfect work," because it endures to the end. It is of little use to begin well, to run well for a time, to climb the steep mountain half-way, and then lose patience and desist from our efforts. We must "persevere to the end" if we would be saved; we must "run so as to receive the prize;" we must toil onward and upward till we reach the summit of the mountain of God; for, there is the golden palace of His magnificence, in which the conquerors of the world "shall reign with God and His Christ forever."

Patience is, moreover, an integral part of the virtue of fortitude, without which our moral goodness is imperfect, and, therefore, not acceptable to God for an eternal recompense: *bonum ex integra causa*. There is no perseverance without patience; and without perseverance there is no crown. "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." (*Apoc. ii. 10.*)

Patience has been variously defined by philosophers and theologians. Cicero's definition is quoted and adopted by the Angel of the schools: "Patience is the voluntary and continued endurance, for the sake of righteousness or utility, of things which are painful or difficult." (*De Invent.* l. 2.) St. Thomas himself calls it, "a moral virtue by which our mind is strengthened against sadness, so that we do not give way to it." (*Sum.* 2, 2, q. 128, 136.) St. Augustine, who has left us an entire treatise on this virtue, defines it, "the sufferance of evils with an even mind, so that we do not abandon the good things by which we may reach the better." (*Lib. de pat.*) He explains it further, where he says: "They are properly said to be patient, who rather suffer evils by not doing evil, than do evil by not enduring it."

Meekness and humility are sisters of patience also, with a strong and distinct family resemblance, and a kindred spirit which makes them help and support one another. The one cannot exist without the others, and

where we find one of them, we naturally expect to find her sisters in closest union with her. We can hardly conceive a patient man who is not meek and humble; nor can we associate impatience with humility or meekness.

But let us return to our Paradise and view this new flower, this lovely plant, which, springing from the root of humility and meekness, climbs up and clusters around the trunk and branches of obedience and crowns the mighty monarch of the Paradise with the glory of its living blossoms. It is the growth of the Sacred Heart; it is one of the ornaments of the Paradise of God; it is another virtue, necessary for us, but unpleasant to our fallen and wounded hearts, and of which, for that reason, the love of the Sacred Heart for us has urged It to give us lessons and examples.

But can anything more be said to exhibit the patience of the Sacred Heart than what we said when treating of Its meekness? Would it not be sufficient to write *patience* for *meekness* there? Patience is indeed so in-

terwoven with the meekness and humility of the life of our Divine Lord, that it is impossible to separate them, or not to see them all when we contemplate either. Yet, there are some actions in which patience has the prominent part; some pages of the Gospel on which patience, rather than its kindred virtues, throws a placid, moon-like sheen, most soothing to the soul that views it. It was patience that endured the cold of Bethlehem, the helplessness of infancy, the hardships of the flight into Egypt, the poverty and persecution of His lot in that pagan land. Patience was with Him at Nazareth to bear, for thirty years, the lowliness and discomforts, the labors and sufferings of the hidden life. Patience supported Him during the forty mysterious days of His fast in the desert — days full of unknown wonders; days which patience claims as peculiarly its own. There was many a hardship to be borne during His public life, whilst He traversed on foot the mountains and plains of Judea and Galilee, without a home of His own, without means of subsistence, without a place where He

might rest His weary head. Think of that King of heaven, a voluntary exile in this hard world of ours, pelted by the storms of winter, oppressed by the summer's heat; a homeless wanderer in the land of His royal ancestors! He is patient for love of us; He complains not; that we might learn of Him to bear the sorrows of life without murmuring against the Providence of our heavenly Father.

Yet this is but the lowest degree of patience, which endures the inconveniences and discomforts arising from inanimate causes. The Sacred Heart of Jesus went further in this, as in all other virtues; it loved us to the end, and, therefore, its patience reached the highest perfection.

Reflect for a moment on all that He must have borne even from those whom we call His friends, His Apostles and disciples; men of the lowest origin, uncouth in their manners, intractable even to His wise and most gentle government; indocile even to His divinely persuasive lessons. For three years He devotes Himself to their instruction, spar-

ing no pains to correct their faults, giving them His own example, in addition to His divine words, to show them how they should live, to impress on their minds and hearts the esteem and love of heavenly things and the contempt of worldly honors. Yet how little fruit rewarded His efforts! They indeed loved their divine Master with all the ardor of their simple hearts; they followed Him, drawn by the charm of His gentle rule. But they sorely tried Him by their waywardness, their jealousies, their ambition, their vanity and their selfishness. To the very end He bears with them, chiding their faults, warning them of danger, guiding them, enlightening, encouraging, loving them as if they had more than corresponded with His endeavors for their benefit. And that, though He foresaw how they would disgrace Him at last by their flight; how Peter would deny Him with perjury; how Judas would sell Him, like a beast of burthen, to his bitterest enemies. This is what makes the patience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with these rude disciples so wonderful, so divine.

How different are our hearts from His! We reprove faults with an unamiable bitterness, which aggravates the wound instead of healing it. When we have to deal with indocile disciples, with inferiors whose nature is stubborn, though the will may be good; we may perhaps begin with gentle admonitions and with a sincere desire to attack only the fault whilst we would spare the offender. But when we find that our chiding is disregarded, our admonitions forgotten; when faults are uncorrected and repeated through the fickleness of a weak heart, or the sudden impulse of a fiery nature; how soon we lose courage; how bitter our invectives become; how quickly what we thought was pure zeal, shows itself to be fretful and selfish natural feeling. "True zeal for the correction of others is full of compassion," says St. Gregory, "whilst impatience is a proof that our zeal was nothing but a deceit." "*Irascimini et nolite peccare.*" (*Ps. iv.*) Learn of the Sacred Heart to be angry without sin; to persecute and hate only the evil which is in others, but to love the offender with a patient and persevering affection.

And if, in bearing with the weaknesses of His friends, the patience of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is so singularly beautiful, what shall we say of the patience with which He supported the malice and ceaseless persecution of His enemies! Who are these enemies? His own people; His own creatures; the poor lost sheep whom He has come from heaven to save; the sinners for whom He will give His blood and His life; for whom He has worked so many wonders and will work so many more; for whom He will exhaust all the resources of His almighty power, His infinite wisdom and His boundless love. And is it possible that these should be His enemies? that they should burn with fiendish hate of His person and give themselves no rest till they have caught Him in their snares and sacrificed Him to their malice? And if such ingratitude is not only possible, but real and far more deadly than words can tell, how is it conceivable that the Sacred Heart should still bear with it in patient love and remain tranquil and unruffled? Look at Him, surrounded by His

own townsmen in the synagogue of Nazareth; by the rabble in the temple of Jerusalem. They are like ravenous wolves, eager to fall upon the Lamb in their midst and tear Him in pieces. They hiss their fury in His face. They heap insults upon Him. They push Him forward to the precipice, over which they may hurl Him to destruction, or seize upon the stones with which they may put Him to death. And He, ever patient, ever mild, as if He were unconscious of their designs, still speaks to them without anger, still loves them and seeks their advantage. Had He commanded the earth to open and engulf the wretches, or fire to descend from above to consume them, all heaven would have applauded His justice. But no! It is His Heart that He would open to receive them, and the only fire with which He would consume them, is the fire of His love. When His less patient disciples urged Him to call fire from heaven to punish an inhospitable people who had driven Him from their dwellings, His only answer was: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son

of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save." (*Luke ix.*)

But of all the wonders of the patience of the Sacred Heart, there is perhaps none more wonderful than its bearing with the perfidious Judas. If anything could have soured that sweetest of hearts, it would have been the perverse meanness, the well-known hypocrisy, the foreseen treachery of that unhappy man. Jesus saw through him from the beginning. His divine eye penetrated the dark hypocrisy under which Judas strove to conceal his avarice, his thefts, his hatred of all good. Those awful words: "What will you give me and I will deliver Him to you," had struck, like a deadly serpent's tooth, on the Sacred Heart, long before Judas spoke them to the Chief Priests. Yet, Judas was chosen as an Apostle, treated as a friend, honored above the rest by being made the depositary of the little store which charity provided for the Divine Master and His followers. Judas was empowered to work miracles and to cast out devils in his Master's name. He was not excluded even

from the Last Supper. For three years the Sacred Heart bore with him and treated him with the same love and confidence as those who would be faithful. Not a look betrayed the least misgiving; not a word showed that his villany was known; and when, at last, the words were spoken, wrung, with a deep sigh, from the bruised and almost broken Heart of the Man of sorrows: "One of you will betray me;" not one of the company there present, save the vile wretch himself, could tell to whom they referred; such had been the even and ever constant affection of their common Master for them all, even for the traitor, who was known to Him alone, and whom He had cherished, for three years, in His bosom, though fully aware that, like a poisonous serpent, he was but watching an opportunity to strike his fangs into the Heart of his Benefactor. Jesus at the feet of Judas in the Cenacle, is a model of patient forbearance which we need not hope to see surpassed: Jesus receiving the traitor's kiss in the garden, with the calm, passionless words: "Friend, whereunto art thou come?"

is a proof that His Heart's patience is inexhaustible, because it is divine.

We need hardly dwell now upon the patience of the Sacred Heart as shown towards Caiphas, Herod, Pilate, during the days of sorrows which were to complete its sacrifice. And yet, what a subject for meditation and for practical reflection is here opened to us! We have thought of all this, perhaps a thousand times, and the deep wonder grows only deeper. Torments have been undergone by many an unhappy man who had fallen into the hands of cruel enemies. We have heard of heroic fortitude displayed, of stoic indifference to pain. But that was the patience of pride or of despair. There was no power to avoid the torture; no escape from the dire necessity of suffering. Here we see torments more fierce than had ever been inflicted, and at the same time, we see power to free the Sufferer in an instant and to chastise the tormentors. And yet, this power is not exerted; the torture is endured without a murmur; the patient, unspeakably patient Sufferer's Heart sends forth no cry of anguish, no plea

for mercy. His flesh is torn with scourges, His temples are pierced with thorns, His hands and feet bored with nails, His quivering, agonized body hangs bleeding at every pore; and still His patience is not worn out, His forbearance not turned into anger. His only words are words of peace, of pardon, of ever patient and enduring love, a prayer for His executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And thus His patience had its perfect work. His love for us made Him patient unto the end; until no further proof of it could be thought of, no higher degree pointed out.

O ye of little faith and little virtue! come and gaze upon this unconquerably patient Heart! Yes, of little faith, since you know not that the afflictions which weigh upon you are sent for your greater good; of little virtue, since you murmur against the inevitable cross of the Christian's life on earth, and lose sight of the true source of your trials, to assail the mere instruments which the fatherly hand of God uses to try you. Learn of the Sacred Heart to bear, at least in silence, the

inconveniences, the discomforts to which your lot subjects you. If you were filled with the spirit of heroic love, you would be most afflicted when you have least to suffer; you would beg for sufferings as the Saints did and your prayer would be: "to suffer or to die;" "not to die, but to suffer." You would look upon those who are the cause of your trials as your greatest benefactors, and love them as the best of friends. "In your patience, you shall possess your souls," says the Sacred Heart to us, (*Luke xxi.*;) and when we have learned this lesson, we shall not lose our tranquillity when we are ill-treated, we shall not allow our hearts to glow with anger or to flutter with resentment; our eyes shall not gleam with indignation, nor our lips quiver with passion, when either our pride is wounded, our self-love rebuked, or our honor and reputation are assailed. We shall possess our souls in patience and in peace, though the blows which fall upon them are both heavy and frequent. For, it is when most bruised and crushed that our patience gives forth its sweetest fragrance. It is when

pressed most severely in the wine-press of affliction, that the precious wine flows most abundantly, which is to rejoice our hearts and the Heart of God, when the day of our tribulation is past. It is the fire of suffering and of sorrow that will send up the incense of our virtue as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to heaven.



CHAPTER VI.

FORTITUDE.

If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. — Ps. xxvi.

HITHERTO our rambles in the Paradise of the Sacred Heart have been amid fragrant flowers, perfumed shrubbery, pleasant groves and scenes of gentle loveliness. We enter now upon a region of a sterner character, still beautiful, but with a grander and more sombre beauty. Here every feature of the landscape tells of power, endurance and resistless might. A towering cliff rises before us from its immovable base, and stands, a very image of calm and fearless strength, lifting its broad front of living rock towards heaven, and defying the storms of centuries to break its solid mass or undermine its deep foundation.

We have studied the meekness of the Sacred Heart, its humility, its obedience, its

patience. There, all was gentle, subdued, yielding. There was no wrath for cruel injustice; no reproach for crying wrong; no complaint under bitter insults; no resistance to unheard-of torture. It was the mild spirit of the lamb, the gentle sighing of the dove, that pictured to us the character of that wonderful Heart; and we might have supposed that there was no other sentiment in it, no room for stronger and more martial emotions. It is not so. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is no craven Heart. It is not a heart without courage. It is indeed immeasurably meek and humble, inexhaustibly patient and forbearing; but, at the same time, it is immovably firm, calmly and serenely courageous; divine in its Fortitude as in all its other virtues. It is this virtue which we are now to consider, and which the Sacred Heart practised for love of us, that we might learn of it to be strong without violence, brave without rashness, firm without obstinacy; as well as meek without weakness, humble without meanness, obedient without subserviency, and patient without dejection.

Fortitude has been defined: "A moral virtue, (one of the four called cardinal,) which enables the soul to meet dangers without being deterred by them from its duty, or drawn by them into rashness." It is, so to speak, a combination of confidence, magnanimity, endurance and perseverance; for we may thus express the four qualities which St. Thomas calls the integral parts of fortitude. It is of this stuff that heroes are made, especially the greatest and noblest of heroes, the martyrs of Religion and of Charity, who gave their blood and their life for God. It is therefore aptly compared to a rock rising from the depth of the ocean and standing aloft above the tumultuous waves, which dash against it in their fury; but neither move it nor break it, nor wear it away. We shall see that this is also a picture of the Sacred Heart, when we shall have studied its fortitude.

Our divine Lord came into this world with a task before Him, and His life upon earth was to be the fulfilment of this task. He came to manifest the truth to men who were

wedded to error; to glorify His heavenly Father; to overturn the throne of Satan in the hearts of men, and to establish the kingdom of God in its stead. His whole life, all His acts and all His words were to be a solemn protest against all that mankind had hitherto admired, esteemed, loved and adored. Against Him and His truth and His maxims were to be arrayed all the power and wealth, all the wisdom and energy of the world. He was to go forth alone and unaided to this warfare, with the clear knowledge of all the hardships, the persecutions, the sufferings, and the apparently hopeless defeat and discomfiture in which His struggle was to be terminated. The prospect was gloomy enough, from Bethlehem to Calvary, through those three and thirty years of ceaseless opposition and of never-ending combat against enemies who were always increasing in numbers and in rage, and under whose combined attacks He must at last succumb and perish. But did His Heart sink within Him at this prospect? did it flutter with fear? did it shrink from the danger? did it shun the

ignominy or the pain? A glance at the crucifix is a sufficient answer to these questions, a sufficient proof of the fortitude of the Sacred Heart. He viewed the path that lay before Him, beset as it was with dangers and trials, and He walked in it to the very end, with as tranquil a heart, as calm a brow, as if neither trial nor danger, neither open enemy nor treacherous friend were awaiting Him.

And though this general view of His life would of itself suffice to give us an idea of the fortitude of His Sacred Heart, yet if we single out some particular instances and dwell upon some special facts recorded for our instruction, we shall have a more distinct knowledge of this virtue, and derive more practical lessons from the examples of the Sacred Heart.

One of the greatest stumbling-blocks to our fortitude is the fear of displeasing men. We naturally lean upon others for support, and when this fails us, we are but too apt to totter and to fall. A smile of derision at our piety, a scornful look at our fidelity to duty,

is, for most of us, the hardest trial, the severest test of our virtue. Hence the dreadful power of human respect and the havoc it makes among those who would otherwise be models of piety. But the Sacred Heart will teach us how to despise human respect and to persevere in our duty in spite of the displeasure and hatred of men. Wonderful and most adorably compassionate Heart! It seems to have foreseen all our weaknesses and all our wants, so that it might strengthen our hearts and prepare them for the dangers that would surround them, and arm them against every attack. For itself and for its own happiness it needed not to steel itself against the influence or power of wickedness in high places, to utter its fearless anathemas against vice, though seated on a throne, or against hypocrisy, though clad in the venerable garb of the sanctuary. But for our sake, and to give us courage in the persecutions we were to undergo, it chose to be a very tower of strength, an impregnable fortress for the defence of virtue and of the honor of God.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, as we have

seen, was full of tenderness and mercy. It was meek, patient, humble, unselfish and uncomplaining; could we think it capable of uttering a harsh word or of harboring an angry feeling, however holy its anger might be? Yet when we turn to His conduct with the proud Pharisees, the haughty Scribes, the selfish Priests of the Temple, the covetous and irreverent dealers and money-changers who made the service of God a pretext and a means for their unhallowed gains; we find in His words and in His actions a display of holy indignation and of unterrified zeal, which prove that His Heart was full of fortitude as well as of meekness. For those who abused the station they held to mislead the artless souls who trusted themselves to their guidance; for those who employed the gifts which God had bestowed to turn away the hearts of men from their allegiance to their Creator, the Sacred Heart had no compassion, no connivance, no sanction. They were the depositaries of the Law, they sat on the chair of Moses, they were the great and the powerful ones of the

land; their hostility was to be dreaded, their friendship would be a safeguard and an honor. All this did not make His Heart quail before them. He denounced them unsparingly; He unveiled their hypocrisy and branded it with its true name; He threatened them with the eternal wrath which their sins deserved; He warned their followers and dupes against putting confidence in them. And thus He aroused all their jealousy, their malice, their hatred, their bitterest revenge. And He knew what would be the recoil of all His zeal upon Himself. He saw Calvary at the end of His career with all its shame and all its agony. But the glory of His heavenly Father was in peril; the souls of men were in danger; the interests of the kingdom of God were at stake; and therefore He could not be silent; He could not stand by and see this havoc done by wolves in sheep's clothing; but He would cry out against them and oppose Himself to their malicious power, regardless of the wounds which would fall to His share. He can bear all the affronts offered to Him-

self; He complains not when He is accused or ill-treated. In all this He has patience and humility and mildness and ready forgiveness. But there is a limit where patience ceases to be a virtue, and where the spirit of the lamb must be replaced by the mighty soul of the lion; and we have our model for this in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

He cared not for the favor of men. He did not flatter Herod to gain his protection. He did not hesitate to oppose the time-honored prejudices which stood in the way of the truth He had come to make known. His doctrine would not be popular; His maxims would affront all the wisdom which had hitherto been cherished; His ways would be a protest against the lives and manners of those whom the world admired. Yet He made no compromise with the wisdom of the world; sacrificed not an iota of His doctrine; changed not a feature in His actions to turn aside the wrath which arose against Him. His Heart gave out its gentle healing virtue in favor of the poor paralytics, the banished lepers, the blind, the lame, the dumb, though

crafty Scribe and jealous Pharisee were to arouse indignation against Him, as a Sabbath-breaker, a magician in league with the powers of darkness, or a rebel seducing the subjects from their allegiance.

He stood unmoved in the midst of the surging crowds that gathered around Him, and though He saw their anger flashing from their eyes, and read in their hearts the fatal designs they had upon Him, He defies them to point to a single word or act of His, which might serve as a pretext for their hatred. He tells them boldly that they have no part with God, because they will not listen to Him; that they, and not He, are the children and the slaves of the evil spirit, the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. There is no anger in His tone, no violence in His manner, no fierce display of valor. It is the calm dignity of truth, the fearless and serene majesty of virtue, it is the fortitude of the Sacred Heart, which does its duty to God and gives testimony to the truth of God, though danger and death await it.

The greater and more threatening the dan-

ger grew, the nearer that long foreseen death approached with its three days of ignominy and torture; the more wonderfully did the fortitude of the Sacred Heart shine forth. It was almost crushed by the weight of its anguish at the horrid array of all that was to come. But when the hour had struck which was to begin its sacrifice, it calmly submitted to the decree of heaven. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," was the sigh that might have escaped from the saddened Heart of Jesus at any moment during His entire life: it could not be suppressed when the olive trees of Gethsemani were seen through the cold darkness of that dreadful night. Yet He does not turn aside from the path which leads to that scene of His agony. He does not hide Himself from the treachery of Judas, nor from the fetters which are to bind Him. Even then, He still gives testimony to the truth and proclaims the doctrine which has brought this storm upon Him.

And when He stands before His judges, though he knows what use they will make of His words, He fears not to repeat the tes-

timony and to remind them of the judgment which He will one day pronounce upon them. O thou Son of David, and Son of God! thou King of Israel and glory of Juda! speak not that fatal word upon which thy life is hanging. Be silent to this as to other questions and accusations! No! He cannot be silent now, because His Father's honor compels Him to speak. Though it be His own death-warrant, He fearlessly proclaims Himself the Son of God, the future Judge and Punisher of His present persecutors.

But in the Roman prætorium, at least, where Pilate seemed so eager to save Him from the unjust rage of the Jews, He might have spoken and acted in such a manner as to secure protection; or in Herod's presence, He might have wrought some miracle to gratify the prince and gain his favor. Think of the dreadful alternative, the white robe, the jeers of the soldiers and of the nobles of Herod's court, the mockery of the Jews, the return to Pilate's house in that garb of folly; and there, the scourges, the thorns, the purple garment. One word, one sign would

avert it all; and that word is not spoken, that sign is not given. The bitter waves of the immense ocean of sorrows will strike upon His Heart; but it will not shrink from the shock, and when their storming is hushed and their dashing calmed, His Heart will still remain unshaken in its fortitude. Its beatings will be stilled, but its love will not die; for, its love is stronger than death. But to His last breath, though He is unspeakably humble, unconquerably patient, and divinely forgiving, He maintains the majestic calmness of His fortitude, and His last cry on the cross: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," is not more a prayer and an oblation of supreme obedience, than a final reiteration of the truth for which He suffers and dies.

Let us now return to ourselves, and in view of these divine examples, learn our own duty. As Christians we must follow Christ, adopt His spirit, accept His wisdom, follow His counsels, keep His commandments. The world, then, which hated Him, will wage war against us. The wicked generation of

vipers, which stung Him with their calumny, and poisoned His life with their rage, will not spare His disciples. The nearer we are to Him, the more closely we resemble Him, the more deeply we imbibe the spirit of His Heart; the more bitter will be the persecution raised against us, the harder will be our lot in this world. The whole history of our race resolves itself into this one fact: the warfare between good and evil; between the City of God and the City of Satan; or, as Job expresses it: "The life of man upon earth is a warfare." (*Job vii.*) And it is the lot of the good to be worsted in the conflict, at least apparently and in so far as this world's prizes are considered. We are battling under many disadvantages, in a foreign land, where everything favors the enemy. We are armed pilgrims struggling through a hostile land towards home; and, though famished and footsore, we are daily harassed by our enemies, who have sounded the alarm and lighted their watch-fires on every hilltop, and aroused the entire region to withstand our progress, with fresh and determined opposi-

tion at every step. And our home seems so far away! and the path is so painful to walk in! the ceaseless attack and defence become so exhausting! Yes, we believe that God is with us; we see the brightness of the heavenly city lighting up the distant horizon, as a beacon of hope and a promise of rest. But what fortitude must ours be to bear up against the fatigues of such a pilgrimage, the hardships of such a campaign, the wounds of such a war!

The love of the Sacred Heart for us foresaw these dangers to our virtue, and therefore it gave us such examples of fortitude as would suffice to inspire us with a courage somewhat similar to its own. Its lessons are full of the same spirit. It warns us of the persecutions that are to come. "If they hate me, they will hate you; if they persecute me, they will persecute you. You shall be betrayed by friends and kinsmen and brethren; and the day shall come when he that kills you will think that he does a service to God. They will bring you before kings and princes for my name's sake; and you shall be hated by

the whole world, because you are my disciples. But fear not those who can kill the body; fear Him alone who can cast both body and soul into hell. Be not troubled; let not your heart tremble, nor anxiously meditate how you may justify yourselves and save yourselves from the rage of the persecution." And oh! with what force these divine lessons come to us, accompanied as they are by His examples. We find in Him, in His words, in His actions, no pretext for a compromise with the world. It is open war, irreconcilable hostility, perpetual combat without peace or truce.

Such is the spirit of the Sacred Heart in regard to the world, and such must be our spirit if we would be its disciples. Yet, how little there is in us of this fortitude! We are forever temporizing, yielding, sacrificing our duty for the sake of peace. We are silent when God is offended; we utter no protest when truth and virtue are blasphemed; we smile when vile words are spoken, when our neighbor's character is traduced. Our holy Faith can be scorned in our presence, our

holy Church derided and outraged in her dogmas, her ministers, her sacred rites and her venerable observances, by those whose ignorance is surpassed only by their malice : and we, the soldiers of Christ, we, the children of the martyred heroes of all ages, we shrink from the defence ; we blush with confusion and timidity ; because, forsooth, we must live with the world and must not lose the friendship of men ! We are cowards and traitors, unworthy of the name we bear. We have not the spirit of the martyrs in us, the fortitude of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Perhaps it is high time for us to imbibe this noble spirit. For, the times, upon which we have fallen, are evil times. The separation between the children of God and the servants of the world is more and more distinctly drawn, and we may be called upon to declare openly for the one cause or for the other. How many of our half-worldly Christians, who now profess to be with Christ and His Church, whilst, at the same time, the world smiles upon them and they revel in its pleasures, glory in its wealth and enjoy

its esteem, how many would falter and fail, desert the cause of truth, and throw themselves, body and soul, on the side of God's enemies, if the day came when the alternative would be poverty and disgrace, the dispersion and degradation of their families, the cold contempt of former friends, and a life of labor and suffering, perhaps a death of ignominy and torture. Our martyr-forefathers embraced this alternative with joy. Let us strive to emulate their noble generosity, their fearless fidelity to duty and to God. Let us study deeply the fortitude of the Sacred Heart and thus make our hearts like it. For, it was filled with this virtue for our sake; not only that it might utter lessons of heroism and give examples of fortitude; but also that it might pour into our hearts the abundance of its spirit and fill them with the courage which will make us share in its victory over the world.



CHAPTER VII.

PRUDENCE.

My son, incline thy heart to know prudence ; then shalt thou understand justice and judgment and equity and every good path.—
PROV. 2.

IN the Paradise of God, though there is an endless variety of scenery, an infinite number of different plants and flowers and fruits, yet all is beautiful and harmonious. There is no violence, no excess, no deficiency. No torrent ever rushes madly down the mountain-side to lay waste the lovely region below. No storms howl amid its groves, or sweep in devastating fury over its flowery landscape, or uproot its spreading trees. No burning sunbeams parch its fresh verdure, or cause its blossoms to languish and droop. No hailstorm beats its budding or ripening fruit to the ground, or harms the many-colored and many-voiced warblers that make its bowers happy with their songs. It is secure against the ravages of wild beasts, and

the depredations of wicked men. It is a region of perpetual peace, of unbroken repose, of undiminished fertility, of ever-varying beauty, and of ever-abiding loveliness.

This is an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the virtues which adorn it. All its virtues are in peaceful harmony, in undisturbed equilibrium. Its humility does not conflict with its magnanimity; nor its patience with its zeal; nor its meekness with its fortitude. The virtues are a loving sisterhood, bright as a band of angelic spirits, linked arm in arm and girding the Sacred Heart like a jewelled garland. Each has a beauty of her own, each a peculiar grace; but these graces and beauties melt into each other and form, by their union, a new and greater glory to crown the Heart which claims them as its own.

The virtue which thus harmonizes all other virtues, which unites them and renders it impossible for one to encroach upon or impede another, is the virtue of Prudence, which holds the first rank among the cardinal virtues, and may be called the guardian, guide and ruler of the rest.

Wonderful things are said of prudence by the inspired writers and by the Doctors of the Church. "Blessed is the man that findeth wisdom and is rich in prudence. She is more precious than all riches. Length of days is in her right hand, and, in her left, riches and glory. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, hath established the heavens by prudence. In the heart of the prudent resteth wisdom; wisdom shineth in his face. My son, if thou shalt incline thy heart to prudence, thou shalt find the knowledge of God; because the Lord giveth wisdom and out of his mouth cometh prudence. If wisdom shall enter thy heart, counsel shall keep thee and prudence shall preserve thee. Get wisdom, get prudence; forsake her not, and she shall keep thee; love her, and she shall preserve thee. With all thy possessions purchase prudence. Take hold on her, and she shall exalt thee. Thou shalt be glorified by her. She shall give to thy head increase of graces and protect thee with a noble crown." (*Prov. passim.*)

The great St. Basil says that prudence is

the true knowledge of what we should do, (*Hom.* 12,) and in another homily, he tells us that whoever will follow the guidance of prudence, will never stray from the path of rectitude. St. Augustine says that prudence is a virtue by which we are guided to choose what is beneficial towards our last end, and to avoid what is hurtful: or, the science of things to be desired and of things to be shunned. St. Gregory maintains that no virtue is genuine unless it is guided by prudence. St. Thomas defines true and perfect prudence as “the virtue which counsels, judges and commands rightly for the good end of our whole life.” (2. 2. q. 47.) Prudence, therefore, is the first, the noblest, the most important of the cardinal virtues. It depends on the gifts of wisdom and counsel, and seems almost identical with them. The great virtue of discretion may be said to be the same as prudence; and we remember what the ancient fathers thought of discretion, which they placed first and second and third in the rank of virtues; thereby giving us to understand that it is indispensable to all

virtues ; since they all degenerate, all become vices, either by excess or by deficiency, unless prudence guides them, regulates them, and presides over all their acts.

The Wise Man sums up all the merit and excellence of this virtue in one sentence : “ *Scientia sanctorum prudentia*. Prudence is the science of the Saints.” (*Prov.* ix. 10.) It is the science which has peopled heaven with its happy inhabitants ; which alone can make us worthy of sharing their happiness one day. It is the science of sciences which is alone worth knowing, and alone is deserving of our study. It is the science which, like an angel from heaven, with its brightness, throws light on our path ; with its strength, enables us to walk without fatigue and lifts us over every obstacle ; with its wisdom, guards us against the deceits of inviting but dangerously devious by-paths ; with its counsel, against the wiles of enemies in the disguise of friendship ; with its power, repels every attack ; with its sweetness, consoles us in every trial ; with its abiding gentleness and love leads us safely to the golden gate of

heaven and then places on our brow the "noble crown" which God has promised to those who, "with all their possessions, would purchase prudence."

When we approached the Paradise of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we saw written in letters of heavenly light the words: "Learn of me." We found that it was, without contradiction, both a paradise and a school; and we were admitted into it only on condition that we would not be satisfied with admiring its beauty and enjoying its fruit, but would also learn the virtues and imitate the examples of the divine Teacher who makes this Paradise the school of the science of the Saints.

The Sacred Heart then is to give us lessons of prudence; and again, it does this more by examples than by words. One sentence of the Gospel and one parable comprise nearly all the recorded verbal lessons of our Lord on this subject. "Be ye therefore prudent as serpents and simple as doves;" this is the only sentence we find in the Gospels directly inculcating this vir-

tue; and the parable of the *prudent* virgins, who kept their lamps trimmed and ready, is the other lesson and the only one which the Evangelists furnish, in addition to the former, and bearing expressly on the same duty. But the whole life of our Lord is an example, a model of prudence, and therefore a far more eloquent and persuasive lesson to us than any which could have been given in words.

His prudence was wondered at when He sat in the temple amid the doctors of the law and the ancients of Israel. Though but a child of twelve years, His questions and His answers displayed a wisdom and prudence which would have brought the teachers of Israel in adoration around Him even then, if they had known the things that were for their good, in that day of their heavenly visitation. But their prudence was the prudence of the flesh, and it is written: "The prudence of the flesh is death." (*Rom. viii. 6.*) We have no record of those deeply-searching questions, nor of His divinely prudent answers; and it may be that this is but another wonder of prudent foresight on

His part for our good. For, our attention would perhaps have been limited to those flashes of heavenly wisdom, instead of being fixed upon the great lesson which He wished us to learn from His example; and which they are not unfrequently called upon to imitate, whom God invites from the turmoil of worldly vanities, to live in His holy house and dedicate their entire being to His service. When Jesus left His holy Mother and St. Joseph, to remain, without their knowledge and consent, in the temple, to attend, as He said, to His Father's business, He well knew that their permission would not have been withheld, had He asked it. Mary and Joseph would have submitted, without a murmur, though perhaps not without a pang, to the will of heaven, and would have parted with Jesus to let Him follow the call of God. He knew this well; but, in His prudent love for us, He foresaw that many an obstacle would be thrown in our way, many a voice raised against us, many a fond affection would hold us back, and many a rebuke deter us, when the low whisper of God's holy spirit

would sound in the depth of our soul: "Go forth from thy father's house and from thy country, and from thy kindred, and come to the land which I will show thee." (*Gen. xii.*) "Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me." (*Matt. xix.*) And therefore His Heart would be the model of our hearts and teach them to be firm against caresses and entreaties, as well as brave against rebuke and scorn, strong against the pang which nature feels when it is offered as a holocaust on the altar of God. He would teach us the prudence of not exposing our young vocation to the storms which would assail it; but wisely steer into the harbor, before the winds are let loose, which would carry us far out into the deep, and perhaps dash us upon the rocks. He gave us the same lesson again, in the person of the one who, when invited to be His disciple, requested that he might first return to his home to perform a last act of filial piety towards his father, and to whom our Lord replied: "Let the dead bury their dead:" (*Matt. viii.*) as if He would say: "Take the grace when it is

offered and do not expose it to be lost in the distracting cares of the world.”

But in order to study the prudence of the Sacred Heart so that we may derive lasting benefit from it, let us consider it in what we may call the three great duties of this virtue: the caution against giving unnecessary offence to others; the care of one's own security, and above all, the foresight of the future, with its dangers and vicissitudes, so as to gain the end in view.

In regard to the first of these three parts of prudence, we have many lessons in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The task which He had undertaken to perform, was one which must, of necessity, bring Him into frequent opposition to established maxims and manners, and, therefore, into frequent collision with those who regarded those maxims and manners as inviolably sacred. His mission was to make known a new and more perfect law, to establish nobler maxims and purer manners; in a word, to remodel and reform the minds and hearts of men. The law, which had been venerated for two thousand

years, was not indeed to be abolished, but perfected; the sacrifices which had been acceptable to heaven were to cease; the temple, which had been the glory of God's people, was to lose its sacred character and its ancient honor. It was for Him to announce and effect these unwelcome changes. Yet see how carefully He avoids whatever might give offence or scandal to those who could not but venerate the divinely sanctioned usages of their people, the time-honored sanctuary of Israel. He is Himself a model of fidelity to all the prescribed observances of the law. His religious love for the house of God is shown throughout His whole career. Reverence for the ministers of God, all unworthy though they were, and obedience to their commands, is a duty which He never neglected and which He required of all. When He cleansed the lepers, He never failed to send them to the priests with their offering, as the law prescribed. His miracles He concealed as much as was in His power, lest they should give umbrage to those who, until then, had been looked upon as the

channels of such graces from heaven. When He found that He was not welcome or was besought to depart, He turned aside without a murmur, and carried His doctrine and His miracles to others better disposed to receive them. In treating of His fortitude, we saw that He could speak boldly and reprove with resistless indignation; but we saw at the same time, that it was duty alone which caused these displays of a holy anger and of zeal regardless of danger; we saw that, even then, He used such prudence, that His enemies could not draw from His zeal and from His holy anger, a single accusation against Him, when they brought Him as a criminal before His judges.

And this leads us to the second duty of prudence: the care of one's own security, in regard to which the Sacred Heart certainly needed no precaution for its own sake. Yet, for our instruction, it was so prudent, that from its example we can derive all that we need to enable us to avoid every danger. We cannot suppose that the Sacred Heart could be influenced by the vanities of the

world; that its purity could be tarnished, its fervor diminished, its love for God cooled by the constant occupations which filled up the busy days of that divine life. It was in no danger. Its union with God could not be broken. Its virtue and its merit could only increase. It is not so with us. We are naturally drawn downward from God and from heavenly things. Our hearts are vulnerable to the shafts of temptation. Our minds may be darkened by the fallacies of worldly wisdom; our souls turned away from God by the allurements of passion or the attractions of creatures. Constant occupation with others, even for their spiritual benefit, must gradually injure our own progress in virtue, unless we continually watch over ourselves and resolutely reserve a portion of our time to renew our recollection and to refresh our spiritual life by prayer and other exercises of devotion and virtue. Unless we take these precautions, our zeal will degenerate into mere natural activity, our care for others into carnal and dangerous affection; our labors will be animated by ambition or

some other equally unworthy motive, and our lives will be spent in vain. It is to teach us this lesson that the Sacred Heart of Jesus would give us the example of prudence; and hence we are told that when He had spent His days in ministering to the wants of others, He retired to the mountains at night, "and He spent whole nights in the prayer of God." (*Luke vi.*) Hence too, when His apostles returned to Him after their mission to the sick and the poor, He went aside with them to a desert place, that they might renew their own interior spirit, lest by too long continued devotion to the good of others, their own souls should suffer harm. It was prudence, as well as eagerness to begin His passion, that led Him to Gethsemane after the last supper, that He might, in prayer, prepare Himself for the coming struggle; and it was for our instruction that He permitted His angel to comfort and strengthen Him, when the bitter chalice of His sorrows was presented to His lips. His rebuke to the sleeping disciples conveys the same lesson as His example: a lesson of prudence in time of

danger, sadness and trial: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (*Mark* xiv.)

There are many other instances in which the prudence of the Sacred Heart shone forth; but it will be sufficient to allude briefly to a few of them, leaving it to our meditation to develop these treasures more fully. Caution in word and action distinguish the entire life of our divine Lord. His maxim was to say nothing in private which might not be preached from the house-tops. (*Luke* xii.) He always forestalled every objection that might be raised against His actions, or defended them in such a manner as left His adversaries nothing to reply. Though envious Scribe and Pharisee watched all His words and all His movements, with eager desire to find Him at fault, yet such was His caution, though combined with the most artless simplicity, that He could, at the close of His ministry, throw out to them the fearless challenge: "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (*John* viii.) His prudence made Him decline to act as umpire between contending brothers for the division of their

inheritance. Prudence dictated His conduct in regard to the tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and that wonderful maxim, in which the whole life of His Church is summed up, and all her conflicts with the powers of earth: "Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." (*Luke* xx.) There is a remarkable sentence in the gospel of St. John, (ch. ii. 24,) which is worthy of our frequent and serious meditation: "But Jesus did not trust Himself to them;" that is, to the multitudes who believed in Him at the sight of the wonders which He wrought. There is a rich mine of divine wisdom here opened for us, whence we can draw precious lessons for our own conduct. It is not meant that we should be distrustful, cunning or suspicious: that would be the prudence of the flesh, which is death, because it is uncharitable. But what need is there of unbosoming ourselves entirely to all that come in contact with us? Why make every one the confidant of all our little troubles and cares and trials? the depository of our complaints and sorrows? The wise man

said ages ago: "Open not thy heart to every man, lest he repay thee with an evil turn." (*Eccli.* viii.) "He that keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from distress." (*Prov.* xxi.) "Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor. If thou wouldst get a friend, try him before thou take him, and do not trust him easily." (*Eccli.* vi.) How few, even of those who are reputed the wise ones among the children of men, have profited by these lessons! But the Divine Spirit who dictated them, is the same that dwelt with all the fulness of His gifts, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and made Him meek and kind and merciful to all, but trust Himself with unrestrained familiarity only to the chosen few, "to whom it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God." (*Matt.* xiii.)

But it is especially in the fulfilment of the third and most important, as well as most difficult duty of prudence, that we shall find matter for admiration and imitation in the examples of the Sacred Heart. Human wisdom and the prudence of the flesh would

never have counselled or approved the means which the prudent foresight of the Sacred Heart of Jesus adopted, to gain the great end for which He had come down from heaven. But the thoughts of God are far above the thoughts of men; and therefore, "He chose the foolish things of the world, that He might confound the wise, and the weak, that He might confound the strong." (1 *Cor.* i.) He came without majesty; He surrounded Himself with no pomp; He was poor and lowly in His parents, in His birth, in His labors, in His associations. His disciples and followers were poor and lowly like Himself. They were not gifted with wealth or learning, or any other advantage which could give them power or influence. His own life seemed to be a series of disappointments, of unsuccessful efforts, of a struggle against hope; and it ended in what must have been accounted the most signal failure. Yet He triumphed in His very fall. His work was accomplished in what was called His very failure. His weakness was His strength; His lowliness was His glory; His final igno-

miny was the victory which laid the world prostrate at His feet. "*Regnavit a ligno Deus.*" It was His more than human prudence which thus forestalled every doubt about the heavenly origin of His doctrine, or His divine Person. All the wisdom and all the power, all the wealth and all the learning of the world, leagued with infernal allies, were united in their opposition to Him. If He triumphs over their combined opposition, it must be by virtue of something that is not human — therefore divine.

It was through the same prudent foresight and care to secure the end He had in view, that He prepared His weak disciples for the trial to which their faith in Him would be exposed. Those who were to witness His fearful agony in the garden, had first seen His glory in His transfiguration. They were to behold the treason of Judas; but they had been told that brother would betray brother, and even the child would rise up against his parents for their fidelity to the service of God. They were to see Him seized by the soldiers and bound as a malefactor: but they were

first to behold those very soldiers twice prostrated by His mere word. They were to see Him dragged from tribunal to tribunal, scoffed, ill-treated, condemned by all His judges, doomed to a shameful death; but they had heard it all foretold by Himself, more than once, in all the details of its terrors; and they knew that He would rise again, though in the bewilderment of their fears and doubts, their sorrow and humiliation, faith in His promises seemed to have perished. But even these doubts and this want of faith was only another means to confirm His triumph: our confidence in Him, our belief in the truths preached to us by those once doubting disciples, is strengthened by their very incredulity, conquered as it was by the multiplied and indubitable proofs which He gave them of His victory over death.

Here we may admire the prudence of the Sacred Heart, seeing how wonderfully and how successfully it provided for the future and disposed all things sweetly, yet irresistibly, to the end it had in view. But let us not

forget that it is the prudence of the Sacred Heart, that is, the prudence which Jesus practised for love of us. Let us not forget, then, what it cost Him; how great was the sacrifice He made for us. It is true that His lowliness, His poverty, His laborious life, His bitter sufferings and His shameful death, were the means suggested by His wisdom to prove His divinity and the truth and power of the doctrine which He came to establish. But this does not deprive lowliness of its hardships, nor poverty of its pangs. It does not render a laborious life, like His, desirable, nor sufferings, like His, sweet to the human heart; nor does it take the bitterness out of the Cross. The Sacred Heart looks only to our good. Its prudence, as well as its other virtues, are sweets which it produces for our nourishment, treasures which it gathers for our enjoyment.

In this view, grateful love is our debt to the Sacred Heart; and, as its disciples, our chief duty is imitation of its virtues. We, who are by nature weak, and perhaps, by our own fault, still weaker; we, who are

surrounded by dangers of every kind, and whose path is beset with so many snares; we need a constant watchfulness, a sleepless precaution. Time does not render us less vulnerable; experience is no safeguard; victory itself is frequently our greatest danger. "Blessed is the man who is always fearful," says the Holy Ghost. (*Prov.* xxviii.) "Watch and pray," says our divine Lord. Defeat by our enemies, sin by consent to temptation is the inevitable fate of that confidence which would lull our fears or close our eyes in a false security. Yet how many live as if their innocence had nothing to dread; as if their hearts were defended by an armor of proof against every shaft. Their eyes must see everything, read everything; their ears must listen to every tale, to softening flattery, and to praise which is freighted with poison. Their feet must carry them to every vain amusement. Their minds must be free to all the thoughts and fancies that may choose to enter; their hearts must refuse themselves no gratification. There is no guard upon their lips, no bridle on their tongue. Is this

the prudence of the serpent? Is this the prudence which the Sacred Heart has taught us at such a cost to itself? Disciple of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! learn of it "to walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, for the days are evil." (*Eph. v.*) Yes! the days are evil. The times are full of danger. "The whole world is seated in wickedness." (1 *John v.*) The days in which we live, are not unlike those early days of the Church, when they who wished to serve God and to keep themselves pure from the corruption of the world, could find no safety among men, but fled to the deserts and dwelt with the wild beasts of the forests, where no sound of revelry could reach them, no scene of criminal indulgence allure their hearts. And though we may suppose that it is not yet come to this with us, at least we cannot doubt that watchfulness and prayer are indispensable to us, with a guard over our senses, a restraint on our passions, and a prudent choice of friends and companions, of occupations and amusements.

If this is the fruit we gather from the Para-

dise of the Sacred Heart, we shall be in no danger of ever being driven from its happy borders, as unworthy to live within them. We shall resemble the prudent virgins and be ready to follow the Bridegroom of our souls, whenever He may come, to the banquet of His paradise in heaven.



CHAPTER VIII.

ZEAL.

The just shall shine and shall run to and fro like sparks among the reeds. They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and their Lord shall reign forever.—Wis. iii. 7.

THE Seer who uttered these words must have had before his eyes a scene of mingled desolation and beauty. The world, as Satan's malice and man's folly had made it, was the scene of desolation: a wilderness of tangled briars; a desert, scathed by the fires of Heaven's wrath. Darkness brooded over the entire region; for, its light had gone out in the iniquity of its inhabitants. But this dismal desert was not to remain forever shrouded in gloom. The time was to come, when the scathed, burnt, desolate wilderness would smile with beauty and teem with bounteous life. And this change, this glorious restoration to happiness and hope, was shown to the Prophet in the symbol of a living fire, running to and fro among the matted reeds

and briars, consuming them and freeing the earth for the good seed and the joyful harvest which were to replace them. The ancient Prophet looked far into the ages yet to come, and beheld a bright band, as of angels, descending from on high, radiant with heaven's purest brightness, glowing with an ardor kindled at a heavenly furnace; clad in brilliant armor, bearing the flashing swords and lances of the sanctuary. The soldiers of God's kingdom advanced, conquering and to conquer, into the domain which Satan had usurped. The just, they whom God had chosen as His instruments, as His conquerors; they that were to burn with zeal for the house of God and to fight for His glory on earth, passed in bright review before the Seer's happy vision, when he cried out: "The just shall shine and shall run to and fro, like a fire among the reeds. They shall subdue God's enemies, as a flame conquers the parched grass of the field. But they shall not destroy those whom they have vanquished. They shall judge them, that is, they shall tell them how to atone for their

rebellion; they shall reconcile them with their angry King and Lord; they shall rule over them and guide them in the duties of loving and faithful subjects. And thus, subduing the hearts of all men to the yoke of their God, to the love of their Father, they shall establish Him, a crowned monarch forever, in His redeemed creation."

But did the holy Prophet see the source whence all this brightness, this ardor, this consuming fire came forth? Did his keen vision penetrate to that intense furnace of living and eternal fire, which was to renew the face of the earth and to make the desert blossom as the rose? We see it, we have it before us; we may penetrate into its glowing recesses: for, it is the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the furnace of zeal for the glory of God. From it the just, the zealous defenders of God's honor, have drawn their valor, the spirit which urges them on. Its radiance surrounds them; its power strengthens them; its love conquers in them. That Divine Heart is, so to speak, the Leader of that glad battalion of heaven's militia; it alone has

brought them together ; it alone has trained them to battle ; it alone can lead them to victory. It is then, at once, the source of all zeal, and the model of all the efforts which zeal suggests and inspires. This virtue of the Sacred Heart we shall now endeavor to learn from it, so that we too may be added to that glorious army of the just, whom the Sacred Heart sends forth to fight its battles and to gain victories over the souls of men, and lead them, willing prisoners, to God, bound with the golden chains of its healing and saving graces.

Well may we say that the Sacred Heart is a model of zeal. What else is that great fire which burns in it, but zeal ? What do all its pulsations mean, but longing desires to see God loved and glorified ; intense anguish at the sight of sin, at the thought that God is not known, not loved, not honored by His creatures ? And this is the definition of zeal ; it is also the whole history of the Sacred Heart.

From all eternity, He, who was to unite that burning Heart to His Divinity, looked

out upon the scene of desolation which Satan and sin were, one day, to produce in the fair creation of God; and from all eternity, He eagerly expected the moment when the brightness of His Heart's love would dispel the gloom; when the showers of His Heart's blood would bring forth a fresh harvest of glory to God, by the destruction of sin and the redemption of man. Zeal for God's glory urged Him to do what He did; to suffer what He suffered. Who but He is the good Shepherd, that leaves His happy flock of Angels in heaven, to come out into this desert of ours, into which we have foolishly wandered, entangled ourselves in the poisoned thorns of vice and exposed ourselves to the wolves which devour the souls of men? Let us once more go to Bethlehem and see the entrance of this good Shepherd into the desert. We behold a speechless Infant, shivering on the cold straw of the manger. But we hear the song of the angelic choirs, who speak for Him and tell us His whole history in the words of their canticle: "Glory to God; peace to men." He has come to

reconcile us to our Maker, to win our hearts back to God, to give us peace, so that we may be worthy to give glory to our Creator. And see how soon He begins His work of zeal. He is hardly born, and already a crowd of shepherds is hastening to this poor abode, to do Him homage and to offer themselves to Him as His first conquest, His first captives to be bound with the chains of His love. And farther away, in pagan lands, a glorious train is already moving forward towards Bethlehem, bringing along the spoils of the East to lay at His feet, in testimony of the love and reverence and fidelity of the hearts which make the offering. Jews and Gentiles are the wandering sheep whom He has come to rescue; and both are brought before Him in humble adoration, as soon as He appears in the wilderness in which they have gone astray.

But He is not satisfied with this beginning of conquest. Zeal for His Father's glory by the sanctification of men, drives Him still farther into the howling wilderness. He goes to seek the lost sheep where the thorns are

most entangled, where the wolves are most numerous and most ravenous. Egypt, the wildest region of this unhappy world, the land most densely darkened by the night of idolatry and superstition, draws Him so powerfully to its dismal deserts, that He cannot delay His saving and peace-giving visitation. He has seen the light of future days dawning upon that darkened land; He has heard the song of praise rising to heaven with the voices of many thousands of holy hermits, whose wonderful lives are soon to change Scete and Thebais into a Paradise of God. There is a bountiful harvest of glory to God slumbering in that arid soil; and He must go, without delay, to sanctify, to fertilize, to bless it.

After such a beginning of His zealous search for the wandering sheep, we should naturally expect a long and uninterrupted course of increasing ardor and of ever-growing labors for the great end of His coming upon earth. It is indeed a deep mystery which envelops the years of His hidden life. The wide world lay stretched out before Him, with its countless myriads of human beings,

all destined to glorify God by their eternal songs of praise around His throne, yet all bearing the mark of His indignation; all needing the love of the Good Shepherd who has come to save them. He alone can win them all; for, none can withstand His divine power, His all-conquering sweetness, His irresistible grace. Yet He does not go forth to the rescue, though His Heart must be oppressed with the weight of His sorrow, at the sight of the ever-deepening deluge of iniquity on earth. But even this apparently strange inaction of so many years is only a more divinely efficacious device of His burning zeal. His wise love for us taught Him to remain concealed, though for Him the world had no danger; that the just, who were to follow Him in the work which He began, might learn from Him to be zealous "according to knowledge;" that is, to prepare themselves by years of retirement for the perils to which their own hearts would be open, whilst they devoted themselves to the salvation of others. It was not an inactive life, not a life without fruit for the glory of God, that the Sacred

Heart of Jesus led in its concealment at Nazareth. All the conquests made by the Church and her apostolic children, all the wonders of zeal which brighten the pages of sacred biography, draw their efficacy, their virtue, their beauty and their merit from that hidden life. There the great fire of His zeal remained, pent up in His Heart, becoming more and more intense, until the abode of His concealment seems to become the seat of a beacon-light, whose brilliancy shines to the very end of the earth; a furnace of living fire, whence all other hearts may be enkindled, "to shine and to run to and fro, like sparks among the reeds."

And when His Heart has thus taught us this lesson, so necessary for the success of our lives, it goes on to other lessons, and teaches us, in its public life, how to exert our zeal for the good of souls. For, no sooner had the time arrived, fixed, by the will of His Heavenly Father, for His manifestation to men, than He goes forth, "as a giant to run His race." From that moment, His life has but one aim, His Heart but one

desire : the glory of God by the sanctification of men. For this purpose He calls around Him His Apostles, that they may help Him in His labors and learn from Him how to perpetuate His kingdom when He will be taken away. Them He sets on fire with His own Heart's ardor; to them He gives His own spirit, His doctrine, His power; and with them He hurries to the scene of His labors. Galilee, Judea, Samaria, and the neighboring districts of Phœnicia, Tyre, Sidon, the Decapolis, are traversed again and again. Cities, towns, hamlets are visited. Rich and poor, great and small, learned and ignorant, Roman and Jew, Priest and Levite, Pharisee and Scribe and Doctor of the Law, all hear the Gospel of salvation announced to them; all witness the power of this heavenly truth; all are drawn to the love of this divine Conqueror of souls. Day and night, on land and on sea, at home and abroad, He is ever ready to make known the truth, to defend the honor of God, to relieve the distresses of the poor, to heal the diseases of the unfortunate, to console the afflicted, or to

denounce hypocrisy, to anathematize scandal and injustice, to threaten the haughty oppressor with the anger of heaven. "Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitude, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then He saith to His disciples: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few: Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest." (*Matt.* ix. 35.) What a picture of zeal is here exhibited! His burning Heart urges Him to spend Himself for the relief of the misery He beholds and cries for help from others. And seeing His disciples around Him, He fills them with His spirit, He animates their hearts with the zeal which consumes His own, and then sends them "to run to and fro, like sparks among reeds." "Go ye to the lost sheep of Israel; heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." (*Matt.* x. 6.)

He bids them regard no opposition, shun no persecution, dread no danger in the prosecution of their good work. And He is Himself the first to face danger and to defy opposition in defence of God and of virtue. We have seen this Heart a model of fortitude, as we now see it a model of zeal. "The Son of man is come to save that which is lost." (*Matt.* xviii.) He lives only for the good of souls and the glory of God. This is the work which His Father has given Him to do on earth, and this He does and will continue to do, in the face of all the powers of earth and hell united to oppose Him. "Come to me, all ye that labor and are burthened, and I will refresh you." (*Matt.* ix.) "Suffer little children to come to me." (*Ibid.* xix.) "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (*Luke* xii.) "For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth." (*John* xviii.) What are these expressions but flashes from that intense furnace of zeal, the Sacred Heart of Jesus? It longs to do good, to save, to heal, to console,

to purify, to sanctify; to make souls worthy of giving honor to their Maker. The more degraded the poor wretch who comes before it, the more tender is its compassion, the more ardent its desire to redeem, the greater its joy when it has saved him. It regards not the exterior, it seeks not the great, the rich, the gifted; it has come to save that which was lost; and to this sole object all its desires tend; for it all its goodness and power, all its mercy and all its compassion are exhausted. Its only joy is when a lost sheep has been found and freed from the thorns, rescued from the wolves and brought back to the fold; when some poor mother's heart, crushed under the weight of its grief for the dead son whom she is following to the grave, is made happy by the sudden resurrection of her hope; when some sin-stained Magdalen comes in humility and contrition, to hear from its all-pardoning mercy: "Thy sins are forgiven; go and sin no more." Its bitterest sorrow is to see its proffered gifts refused, its graces slighted, its love unaccepted, its pardon and its salvation rejected.

It pines over Jerusalem, which would not receive its merciful visitation, it yearns with anguish over the unhappy people, who would be deaf to the warning voice of the Good Shepherd and would madly rush to the destruction, from which He had left heaven to preserve them. "Seeing the city, He wept over it, saying: If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes." (*Luke xix.*) His Heart is broken, because His people will not be saved. And yet, He knows how fiendishly they hate Him; how eagerly they thirst for His blood; how loudly they will cry: "Crucify Him! Away with Him! His blood be upon us and upon our children!" O most unhappy and most ungrateful people! But O strangely and unutterably zealous Heart of Jesus, which could still love them, still yearn for their salvation; yea, long to shed its last drop of blood, not to condemn them and their children, but to purify and save them and all other ungrateful sinners whose iniquities He has taken upon Himself.

Zeal for souls is the key-note of the Passion. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." (*Luke* xii.) Fearful as it is, that bloody baptism, from Gethsemane to Calvary, yet it is not only submitted to, but impatiently desired, painfully longed for, because that baptism is to cleanse the sinners whom He has come to save; that blood is to wash away the sins of the world and to blot out the decree of death, written by the finger of God upon His faithless creatures, and to adorn with immortal beauty and brightness the souls which He would lead captive to heaven.

But let us consider how compassionately He foresees danger to those who were dear to Him, because they had assisted Him in winning back sinners to God; whom He had chosen that they might continue "to bring forth fruit and that their fruit might remain." (*Jno.* xv.) Them His Heart would not discourage by the sad scenes of His humiliations which they were to witness. And therefore, His zeal prompted Him to pre-

pare them for the ordeal through which their faith in Him was about to pass. "The Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, to be spit upon, buffeted, condemned as a malefactor, crucified as a slave, put to death as one whose presence infects the earth. You shall be scandalized in me and scattered as sheep when the shepherd is struck down. But fear not, I will gather you together again on the day of my triumph. Behold now I have told you, that when these things come to pass, you may remember that I told you."

More astonishing still is His zeal for the unhappy traitor, whose money-loving soul was to sell his Divine Master to the Jews. There, surely, was the son of perdition; there, was a heart too hard even for the all-subduing love of Jesus, who might have left him in his obduracy, since it was evident that no effort of grace would soften him. Yet to the very last, what gentle constraint, what almost compelling appeals were used to win that perverse heart back to the love of its fond Master! The mild rebuke of his ava-

rice conveyed in the defence of the fervent Magdalen at Bethania, seems a defence of Judas as well, to screen him from the indignation which his heartless and hypocritical remark was exciting. And what was the sorrowful cry wrung from the Heart of Jesus at His Last Supper: "Wo to the man by whom the Son of Man shall be betrayed," but the thunder of the divine justice, which would even thus arouse that hard heart to repentance? All was in vain. Jesus knew that it would be in vain. Yet He would not, could not let that disciple perish. He washes those feet with an excess of humility and tenderness, though He knows that their next journey will be to the mortal enemies of his Lord, for the purpose of bargaining away His blood for money. Those feet had once been so "beautiful when they came over the mountains as of one who brought glad tidings of peace;" (*Isai.* lii.;) and Jesus would charm them back to that path and make them more beautiful than before. Why all these persistent endeavors for one who was preëminently "the son of perdition," if not

to teach us that we must never despair, never desist from our efforts even when years of zealous labor for the gaining of a perverse and obdurate heart, give no promise of success; to encourage our zeal and excite it to constant and continued exertion, even where ingratitude is blackest, hypocrisy most repulsive, and perverseness most barren of hope?

The flinty heart of Judas turned the edge of all the graces offered and remained in its impiety to the end. But there was another heart to be won back from its treason and its denial of its kind Master. The hot-hearted and headlong impetuosity of Peter had carried him into danger for which he was not prepared; and he fell. An hour ago he was ready to die with his Master; now he swears that he never knew Him. Poor Heart of Jesus! Not a single one of all the possible pangs must be spared it; and what pang is more bitter than the ingratitude of a friend? Yet that Heart still loves its weak disciple, and forgetting its own sorrows, it thinks of him and pursues him and brings him back, a wounded, bleeding, but penitent sinner, to

the feet of his Saviour. It was fortunate for the fallen Apostle that he had that Heart to compassionate him, to forget his ingratitude, to pardon his cowardice. But the zeal of the Heart of Jesus looked to the future, when Peter, "once converted, would confirm his brethren;" and he, who was to be the main channel through which the redemption of Jesus was to circulate, like a life-giving stream, through the members of His mystical body, was the first on whom the victorious merits of His sufferings were bestowed; the first trophy of the zeal of the Sacred Heart in its Passion.

For now, that zeal seems to be the king, the ruling monarch of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It has encircled its brow with the royal diadem, it has put on its armor and goes forth to the great battle against the sins of the world. It searches them out wherever they lurk; it draws forth the monsters and leads them in chains to the spot where it will crush and destroy them. From the garden of Eden it drags forth that first great sin from which all others sprang, a poisoned

brood which has filled the earth with its hideous and innumerable offspring. All the crimes which have disgraced the world from the days of Adam to this day of its triumph, are gathered there around their conqueror. All the crimes of future ages too must appear and be crushed with the rest. From land and sea, from city and hamlet, from the deep dark forest and from the smiling plain, from the royal palace and the hovels of the poor, from the sanctuary as well as from the haunts of wickedness, they come in countless hordes, — a fearful array, from the day of Calvary to the day of doom; — driven to the sacrifice by this king of the Sacred Heart; because that is the day of its triumph over them all.

But then begins another search. For, the destruction of all the crimes of men will not be an easy victory for the Heart whose zeal is now the crowned monarch of all it desires. The sorrows and the sufferings foretold by the Prophets and prefigured by the events, the persons, the sacrifices of four thousand years, are the price of the victory. And all

these come before the humanly frightened Heart of Jesus, marshalled by its zeal. Every insult, every blow, every pang of mind and body, the spittle of the vilest rabble on that divine countenance; the welts and wounds of the scourges, the sharpness of the thorny crown; the deep ignominy of Herod's court; the false accusers; the crying injustice of his condemnation; the cross, the nails, the long agony and the final pang of death; — there they stand before that frightened, fainting Heart. But its zeal is its King now, and makes it accept all that dismal array of torture, submit to it, embrace it for the sake of God's glory by the sanctification of souls. It cries out even then: "I thirst" for this dreadful but salutary consummation. But at the same moment, that Heart seems broken and crushed by the weight of its sacrifice. It is "sorrowful even unto death;" its warm red blood has been pressed out at every pore, and glitters like dew on the grass of Gethsemane. Crushed and broken as it is, yet the zealous Heart of Jesus does not shrink from the sacrifice. God will be glorified;

souls will be saved; the decree of death will be reversed: then come what will, that Heart will bear it all; its zeal will remain crowned to the last and will proclaim its final triumph amid the gloom of Calvary: "It is consummated;" the battle is fought; sin is vanquished; Satan is forever dethroned! With the last pulsation of that Divine Heart, its zeal gives peace and pardon to the dying thief, and bears his purified soul away from Calvary, as a trophy of its valor, a symbol of the fruits of its victory.

The Heart of Jesus is stilled in death at last. But its zeal has not abandoned it. It lies in wait within that strong citadel for new conquests. And when the lance of the Roman Tribune opens the way, it rushes forth and captures his soul to the love of that Heart which is dead on the cross. Happy opening of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! It is the golden portal of the triumphal way, through which the zeal of that Heart will forever sally forth at the head of the graces, the blessings, the love, the mildness, the gentleness, the sweetness of that Heart, invinci-

ble warriors, to scour the earth in quest of sinful, sorrowing, broken hearts, to win them, to heal, to console, to purify, to save; and to lead them along that triumphal way, through that golden portal, into the royal city of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Did it not gather together once more the disciples who had been dispersed like sheep when their Shepherd was struck? Is not their reviving faith in their Divine Master, their renewed love for Him, their strengthened attachment to Him after His Resurrection, the fruit of the same zeal, which had borne with their previous waywardness, and which now pardons their infidelity? Did it not enter into their hearts, burn them with its ardor, and send them "like sparks among the reeds," to renew the face of the earth? What were the occupations of the Sacred Heart during the forty days of delay on earth after its victory over death, but arming, training, and filling with martial prowess and invincible gifts, the warriors whom it would send forth to subdue the world? Zeal still reigns supreme. It presided at the manger of Bethlehem; it

brought Jews and Gentiles to the feet of the new-born Saviour. It also presides over the closing days of that divine life, and dictates the last words spoken on earth by Him who had come as the Good Shepherd into the desert: "Go ye into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature," (*Mark xvi.*,) that every creature may "know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent;" that every soul may serve its Maker and reach the glorious destiny for which He made it.

We might now turn to the Church, in which the life of the Sacred Heart is continued and reproduced, and pursue the history of the same zeal in all her conquests and in all the blessings of time and of eternity which she dispenses to mankind. For, the Church is the creation of that zeal, its living and imperishable monument. But we have come not merely to admire, but also to learn. The zeal of the Sacred Heart is a lesson for us, and it is time we were applying it to ourselves.

And here a sad and distressing thought presents itself, as we gaze out upon the world

for which the Sacred Heart did and is still doing so much. Look at the boundless tracts of Asia, the vast, unknown wastes of Africa, the immense regions of the New World, and the innumerable island-worlds of the oceans: all teeming with human beings, souls which the Good Shepherd came to save, and for which the zeal of the Sacred Heart burned with its divine ardor. Go even where Christianity has shed its brightest beams and bestowed its richest blessings. Look at all the nations of the earth; and of the many millions of souls, how many can you count as the conquests of that zeal or the trophies of its victory? Can it be that two thousand years of the efforts of that zeal, two thousand years of such blessings, such power, such light and heat as the Church has shed upon the world, have left the world as we now see it,—a wilderness of errors, falsehood, superstition, vice? a scene of wildest confusion, anarchy and revolt? Are not men laying violent hands upon God and pushing Him madly out of His own creation? They will not recognize Him; they will not have

Him; they bid Him be gone and let them rule their own world after their own fashion. They need not His light or His guidance; they regard not His laws or His rights; they scoff at His threats and care not for His promises or rewards. Is this the end of all the zeal, and the result of all the sacrifices which zeal imposed upon the Sacred Heart? Surely this should not be. There is something else in fault, and perhaps we shall find the fault at our own doors.

Could the world be what it is to-day, if Christians had been true to their calling and their grace? if they who came nearest to the Sacred Heart, and who should have been most ardently kindled with its zeal, they whom the Good Shepherd specially and most pressingly called to its aid in rescuing His lost sheep from the wolves, had been truly zealous, and devoted without selfish reserves to their work? Where is our love for souls? Where is our light so shining before men, that they may praise, not us, but our Father who is in heaven? Where is the single-hearted, pure, unselfish labor to make God

known and loved by all whom we can reach? How many there are, whose souls should be constantly crying out: "Lord, who is like to Thee?" but who are practically and as continually seeking their own glory, exalting their own merit, and worshipping their own excellence! How many are wedded to ambition, to the desire of ease, the pursuit of wealth, or of pleasure! How many, if they do not lead souls astray, will neither labor to save them, nor allow others to save them; but oppose the zeal of others through petty jealousy, fear of unfavorable comparison, or greed of gain! Are we seeking the things that are Christ's, or the things that are our own? (*Phil. ii.*)

And say not that the salvation of souls is the duty of the Priests; of those who have consecrated their lives to the Church. "God has given to every man commandment concerning his neighbor," (*Eccle. xvii.*;) and if any one perishes because one of us did not warn him or stretch out a helping hand, "the sinner indeed shall die in his iniquity, but God will demand his blood at our hands." (*Ezech. iii.*)

Do we not know that the world is Satan's ally against God and against the Church, which is God's kingdom? And yet, are we not perpetually making concordats with the world, deprecating its taunts, begging for its smiles, kissing its hand, and giving it one-half, at least, of our allegiance? Do we not sacrifice our duty, our conscience, our Catholic principle, in a thousand ways, at the shrine of the world, for the sake of popularity, wealth or social position? Do we not offer our very children to this Moloch, by the education we give them at home, and the education we pay others to give them in fashionable institutions? Do we not see the gigantic efforts made by the enemies of the Church to pervert her children, to intensify prejudice and hatred against her and her doctrines, her ceremonial, her hierarchy, and her divine prerogatives, by means of the Press, from which they send forth, day after day, thousands of lying pamphlets, tricked up with all the sophistry of perverted talent and all the glitter of meretricious art? And how many of us are helping, fostering and propagating

this monstrous evil, by reading and circulating such books and papers? Do we not know, and has not our glorious Chief proclaimed again and again, that we must set Press against Press, and use the weapons of our enemies to defeat them? Yet, what are we doing? Where is our zeal? Our wealth is securely hoarded, to cry out against us when we shall stand before God, who gave it for a good and holy use; but it is not offered to further the interests of God's kingdom, to establish a strong and efficient Catholic Press, to circulate Catholic books and periodicals, to found and support grand Catholic Institutions. Why is this? Why should error inspire boundless liberality into its followers, and Truth be left to pine away and starve through the indifference of those whom it blesses?

Let us then acknowledge that the fault is ours, in a great measure, that the view of the world is so unsatisfactory and the fruits of the zeal of the Sacred Heart so disproportioned to its power and its activity. If we had more zeal for the interests of the Sacred

Heart, if our hearts were more like that Divine Heart, the world would be better and happier; God would be more known, more glorified, more loved; and thousands of souls, now on the way to perdition, would be rescued from error and from vice, and would one day be the eternal trophies both of our zeal and of the love of the Shepherd who gave His life for them. Life, wealth, talent, place and power, all must be devoted to the glory of God; they have no value, save in so far as used for that noble end. They are the talents lent us by our Master, for the purpose of being multiplied by our industry. If we are careless in their use, negligent of their increase, or, worse yet, if we divert them to our own interest, and, worst of all, if we basely betray them to the enemy of our Lord; our lot will be forever in "exterior darkness." But if we are faithful to our trust, loyal to the cause to which we have pledged ourselves, true to the interests of our God, our Church and our own souls; then the zeal of the Sacred Heart will be kindled in our hearts, and we too, each

in his own degree, “shall run to and fro, like sparks among the reeds;” we shall labor by word, by example, by prayer, by our talents or our wealth, by whatever means may be in our power, to promote God’s glory by the salvation of souls; and we shall thus secure to ourselves the reward of which the Prophet speaks when he says: “They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many unto justice, as stars for all eternity.” (*Dan. xii.*)



CHAPTER IX.

PRAYER.

Taste and see that the Lord is sweet. — Ps. xxxiii.

THE Garden of Eden, which God created and adorned as the home of His first-born on earth, was an abode of untold beauty and of almost unimaginable bliss. God's wisdom presided over the choice of its ornaments, the disposition of its numberless charms, as well as of its magnificent wealth of what was necessary or useful to His favored earthly children. His power and His love conspired together to collect into that blissful Paradise whatever could gratify, surprise, delight, as well as what would nourish and enrich the creatures who were to dwell in it, as in the ante-chamber of heaven. It was then worthy of the great God who was its author, of the glorious Paradise of heaven of which it was the type, and of the destined heirs to the vacant thrones in heaven, for

which it was to be a prelude and a preparation. And when all was finished with admirable skill, when God had looked down on His master-piece, and had blessed it because it was so lovely and so perfect, His first-born were ushered into their abode and made masters of its beauties, its treasures and its happiness. Who can tell the transports of delight which must have thrilled through those young hearts when they beheld that infinite variety of beauty and of good, of fruit and flower, of plant and animal, the warbling songsters in the groves, the gay, harmless gambols of huge creatures of ever new and surprising form? Who can tell the sentiments of those just awakened souls, when through all the avenues of eyes and ears and taste and touch and smell, came pouring in upon them the full tide of the grandeur, wealth, magnificence and loveliness of that region of delights? Ah! well may we regret that the envy of Satan deprived us of the joys of that Paradise and banished us out into the frightful, desolate wilderness in which we are now condemned

to wander during the sad years of our lives. But our regrets are useless. That Paradise is forever closed against us; and sad indeed would our lot have been, had not the compassion of our Creator prepared for us another and a better Paradise than that of which sin had deprived us. But yet, whilst that garden of all loveliness was the home of our innocent parents, what was the chief source of their happiness? From what fountain did their purest, sweetest, heavenliest joys gush forth to flood their ecstatic souls? Was it the warm and golden sunshine, which slept so calmly on the green sward, or sported on the waving thickets? Was it the gentle breeze that caressed them and brought on its wings the fragrance of a thousand blossoms? Was it the mingled concert of myriad birds, or the ravishing beauty of their varied plumage? Was it the ever fresh sweetness of countless fruits from the trees of that wonder-land? All this, no doubt, was full of bliss, and more, which our minds cannot imagine and our tongues cannot tell, continually revealed new charms and opened

fresh fountains of joy for the happy beings whom God had thus favored. But none of these things can be called the chief source of their delights, the crowning glory of their magnificent dwelling-place. What then was this greatest of their blessings; this joy, in comparison with which, all their other joys seem to fade into mere shadows? It was, that in this home of innocence and purity, in this earthly temple whence all sin was excluded, God Himself loved to dwell with His creatures, to converse with His children and to permit the familiar intercourse with Him, which indeed rendered the dwellers of earth little less than the Angels, and made the Paradise of Eden a very resemblance to the Paradise of heaven. Ah! this is the greatest loss which the malice of Satan brought upon our unhappy race. It was the loss of our God and our Father, who could not abide where sin had been admitted. We can hear His sweet voice no longer. We have lost the language of heaven. The language of our native land is become to us an unknown tongue, which we must now learn painfully

and wearily, and in which we can hardly hope to do more than stammer, like children, till we return to the home where it is spoken in all its richness and beauty. Sadder far, for this loss than for all the others, would our lot have been during our exile in this valley of tears, had not the compassion of our heavenly Father given us a Teacher of that beautiful language, from whom we can learn it and with whom we can converse in it.

That heavenly language is Prayer ; and our teacher is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In this divine Heart we are restored to Paradise ; we dwell within its blissful borders and find it an abode of all sweetness, a boundless region of everything which is delicious to the taste, ravishing to the sight, and filling our whole souls with ecstatic emotions of joy. It is richer far, more lovely, more adorned than the Paradise which is lost ; and we, who are its favored inhabitants, may well exclaim in the bold song of the Church : *O felix culpa !* O happy fault, which banished us from an earthly garden to admit us into one that is

divine! O happy loss of the Eden of old, which has gained for us this new Eden, upon which all the treasures of heaven have indeed been exhausted; a Paradise which unites all the joys of the ancient abode of innocence with those of that infinitely happy home for which that was but a preparation.

Here, too, the chief source of our joys is the presence of God, and familiar intercourse with Him is our most glorious privilege. Here we drink in the delicious melody of that sweetest of all languages, the language of heaven. Here we can learn its mysterious words and whisper them in the ear of our present and listening Father, who loves to dwell here with His redeemed creatures, with the children who have been won back to His love.

The language of Prayer is then the language of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and we have entered into this Paradise to learn that most eloquent and most powerful, as well as most delicious and harmonious of tongues. It is a language which is best spoken without the aid of human words; which is most elo-

quent when composed of the voiceless affections of the heart, the silent tear of sorrow or of love or of wounded zeal, and the deep longings and yearnings of the soul for the strong and living God, which can find no words in the poor speeches of earth. Yet it breaks out, at times, in such words as our lips can form and in such songs as human voices can sing; as if it would emulate heaven upon earth and make this land of sorrow resound with its varied tones of sadness or hope, or of gladness and loud exultation, in feeble imitation of the mighty waves of angelic music which swell and sway along the vaults of God's heavenly temple.

But let us now return to our Teacher and Model, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and receive from it this lesson of prayer, which is at once so delightful and so necessary: delightful, because it is a foretaste of heaven; necessary, because without the aid which prayer alone obtains, we can not hope for the fulness of joy which heaven alone can bestow.

The Sacred Heart is a model of prayer.

We may say that it is all prayer. Its only occupation is prayer. From the instant of its first pulsation, its prayer has never ceased to this moment; and for all eternity it will continue this, its chosen and favorite occupation. From the first instant of its creation, there was lighted up within it the divine fire of perpetual adoration, thanksgiving, oblation and petition; and throughout all eternity the sweet-smelling incense will continue to rise from that living Altar to the throne of the Most High. For, as St. Paul says: "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the heavens." It is He of whom God spoke: "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee; and thou art a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech." It is He, "who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications, was heard for His reverence; and who, because He continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood; whereby He is able to save forever those that come to God by Him, always living to make intercession for us." (*Hebr. v. 5-7.*)

Sweet was the music which rose to heaven from this unhappy earth, when the Sacred Heart of Jesus began its pleadings for mercy and grace in favor of our sinful race. Till then there had thundered against the golden gates of heaven the echo of human wickedness and folly; the cry of blood calling for vengeance; the sounds of blasphemy; the songs of pagan worship, in which Satan made a mockery of God. And heaven closed its ears against the harsh storm of insult and outrage; because even then the voice of the future High Priest was raised, and the incense of His intercession was pleading for those that knew not what they did. But now the tones of His voice rise from the manger of Bethlehem; from the deserts of Arabia, from the dark cities of Egypt. The incense of His prayer comes up from the humble dwelling of the Holy Family at Nazareth, from the Courts of the Temple, from the wild wastes of the desert of Judea, where, for forty days and nights, the Law-giver of the New Covenant conversed with His heavenly Father in solitude, and perfected

•

the Lam of love which was to restore us to the privileges of children of God. Oh! that we could go and dwell with Him in that desert, which His presence changes into a very Paradise of delights! that we could penetrate the hidden secrets of those forty days and nights; our own hearts united with His, and their cries and supplications, their praise and thanksgiving rising with His to the throne of grace! How soon we should learn the language of His Heart, the language of prayer, where no other sound would divert our attention! How soon our hearts would be filled with the spirit of prayer, and our souls be drawn upward to have their conversation in heaven! Why is it that we think so seldom of those wonderful days spent by our Lord in the wilderness? that we do not constantly feed our souls on the mysteries they contain? It was for us that He buried Himself in the desert; for our instruction He retired into solitude to converse with God. He is our model of prayer; we must imitate Him in order to learn it and to taste its surpassing sweetness. Like Him, we may

not devote our entire lives to solitude; we may have work to do for our heavenly Father in the busy haunts of men. But, like Him, we should at times fly away and be at rest, dwelling in solitude, and speaking with God, or listening to His voice, where no sound of human language can disturb us. Like Him, too, even in the press of outward occupations and in the zealous performance of the duties which God imposes on us in our state of life, we should keep alive in our hearts the fire of devotion, and send up, in the silent temple of our undisturbed interior, the incense of perpetual prayer. Like Him, when the day is spent and the noisy tumult of the world is hushed, our hearts should rest on the bosom of our God, and in our silent chambers we should pray to our Father, "who will hear us in secret." Of Him it is said, that He retired to the mountains and "spent whole nights in the prayer of God;" of us it should be true that, even in sleep, "our heart is watching with that of our Beloved." (*Cant.*) His Heart was ever pleading for us. Its whole life was one uninterrupted prayer, now silent,

voiceless, interior; now sounding in human words, but with such sweetness and power as human language had not possessed before.

And now, what is the occupation of the same Heart? What has been its work, in heaven and on earth? Oh! that our eyes were opened, that we could see what the Angels see! and our ears, that we could perceive the sweet melody that floats upon the air! that our hearts could understand the unseen activity, the unheard eloquence of the Sacred Heart! There, in the highest heavens, on the very throne of God, that Heart is now burning the incense of its intercession; it is now delighting the Most High with the sounds of its prayer. The music of its voice is heard above the songs of the thronging Angels who hymn the praises of their Maker; above the glad canticles which come, with the sound of many waters, from the choirs of the Saints; above the clear, silvery strains of Mary's more than seraphic song. And its pleadings are for those whom it loves on earth; for those whom the Father hath given it, and of whom it will

not lose any one ! Their names are written upon its living tablets ; and those names are heard in heaven, as it rehearses them and engraves them deeper and deeper by its repeated intercession. O happy we, if our names are written there ; if our names are spoken in the ear of God with such resistless music !

But what shall be our esteem of prayer, when we see that it is the heaven of the Sacred Heart ? Surely, our poor hearts must be sadly perverted, if prayer can be to us anything but a Paradise on earth ; if they can taste God and find Him not sweet ; if they can eat manna and not wonder at its more than earthly delight.

Prayer is the eternal occupation of the Sacred Heart in heaven. Prayer is also its perpetual occupation on earth. It seems as though the Heart of our Lord thought that this world was the proper scene for His supplication in our behalf. Heaven is indeed the treasure-house whence all graces descend ; and hence, that divine Heart would be there, to open heaven's treasury by its powerful

pleadings. But earth is the home of our poverty, whence the cry for mercy should arise with such force as would carry it up even to the ear of God, and “not depart till the Most High had regarded its appeal with favor.” Our weak voices could never hope to penetrate the skies and reach the throne of grace. Therefore, the Heart of Jesus would remain among us, “ever living to make intercession for us.” Its voice would be like the eagle, to carry our voices aloft on its wings; and its music would correct the harshness of our discord and make even our cries pleasing in the ear of God. Earth is the scene of men’s ingratitude and of their inconceivable perverseness, even after all that God has done to win them. The sins of a redeemed world, of creatures for whom the blood of Jesus had been shed in vain, would cry more loudly than ever against them and call down the wrath of heaven for their destruction. But the Sacred Heart still loved the wandering sheep, still longed for the return of the prodigals, still yearned for the happy moments when it might say to

the penitent Magdalen: "Thy sins are forgiven;" to the sorrow-stricken thief: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise;" it still cried: "I thirst" for the souls of my brethren. Its friends too were mingled with the guilty crowd; those whom it loved so well were still in exile and in bondage. And therefore it could not abandon them; it must remain to shield and protect them. It would still plead for the guilty race of sinners, still cry for mercy, and avert the anger of God. And therefore it would remain on earth in the midst of the wicked ones, as a safeguard against the blows of divine justice. And oh! with what strange, lavish, wasteful prodigality of love it was pleased to remain with us; multiplying its presence and its intercession beyond the power of all human calculation; because it has set no limit to the repetition to this greatest of all wonders.

And now, from the sad yet glorious evening of His Last Supper till the end of time, on ten thousand altars and in ten thousand lowly tabernacles, in every region, in every city and town and hamlet that desires it, His Heart

abides day and night, and its sole occupation, its happiness is, to plead for us, to be "ever living to make intercession for us." He has, as it were, lighted, on every hill-top the watch-fires of His love, and placed His own Heart as sentinel to guard His people. And His clear, sweet voice is heard far above the horrid din of this world's wickedness, above the cry of innocent blood, above the wailings of oppressed orphans and widows, above the blasphemies and impieties of those who, in very hate of God, have conspired to blot out His name and His honor on earth. That clear, sweet voice rises from a hundred altars in the populous city; from the humbler tabernacle of the village church; from the quiet convent-chapel; from the rustic sanctuary in the lonely forest, or the gleaming monastery on the summit of the snow-capped mountain. And its music is soothing, its tones are dear to the heart of God. It is the same voice that sounds perpetually in heaven, mellowed by the distance, but as melodious and as powerful to arrest the uplifted arm of justice, to unlock the treasures of God and to pour

down choicest benedictions upon the earth, which sends such music to the skies.

As prayer is the happiness of the Sacred Heart in heaven, so is it its heaven upon earth, in the mystic life which it leads on our altars. The Sacred Heart is, then, our model and our teacher of prayer, in a manner more wonderful than it is of other duties and virtues; since it remains really present with us to teach us, by its own perpetual example, how sweet it is to converse with God, how glorious a privilege prayer bestows. O wonderful Teacher of the language of heaven! so patient with thy unruly disciples; so gentle and so persevering in thy efforts to teach them! And yet, how few of us are willing to receive His lesson; how irksome to most of us is that which should be our only joy!

And, therefore, to overcome our sloth, this divinely patient Teacher must insist on the necessity of prayer, on its efficacy and its power; and thus enlist our fears and our self-love in His service, and force us to learn His lessons by motives in which our own

hearts are interested. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," is the terrible sentence which should arouse all our energy in the exercise on which our eternity depends. The consciousness of our weakness, the remembrance of our falls, the scarcely healed scars of our many wounds; the number, the power, the superhuman skill and the sleepless malice of our enemies; all should urge us to persevere in prayer. For, prayer alone can strengthen our weakness, support our tottering steps, shield us against "the fiery darts of the wicked one," and clothe us in the invincible armor which will finally triumph. "Watch ye, therefore," he repeats, "praying at all times, that ye may escape all these things." (*Luke xxi.*) If then we will not taste the Lord in prayer because He is sweet, we should, at least, fly to Him, because He is the tower of our strength. If the fruit of this Paradise of the Sacred Heart is not yet pleasant to our vitiated palate, we should still eat of it daily, lest we pine away and perish.

To encourage us still more, our Divine

Master shows us the wonderful power of prayer and its infallible efficacy. "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." (*Matt.* vii.) "The Father loveth you, and whatsoever you shall ask Him in my name, He will give it." "Again I say to you, that if two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven." (*Matt.* xviii.) "If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will and it shall be done unto you." (*Jno.* xv.) "Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive." (*Matt.* xxi.) The Gospels are full of similar promises and assurances; and they are the words of Eternal Truth, which shall never pass away, which can not fail of their effect, and can not deceive us.

Prayer is then endowed with the omnipotence of God Himself; and, by prayer, we too become endowed with the same divine attribute, in so far as it places omnipotence at our

disposal. Here then we have an instrument in our hands which will work wonders for us whenever we will; a power, which nothing can resist; a master-key to all the treasures of heaven; a shield against every danger; a comfort in every sorrow; a light in darkness; a joy that never fails; a food that never palls on the taste; a strength which no hardship can break; a life which can not die. It is a source of knowledge, such as no earthly science can unfold; a mine of wealth yielding treasures of which death can not rob us; a royal charter of such privileges and dignities as no mortal monarch ever possessed or could bestow.

Is it then possible that we should know all this and believe it on the infallible authority of God Himself, and yet be slothful in prayer! let this wonder-working instrument lie unused at our side; this resistless power be idle; this mine unexplored; this science unlearned; its dignity and its surpassing glories unappreciated and neglected! Must we then be driven to prayer, like unwilling scholars to an irksome task, and apply to it with

reluctance, and leave it with a sense of relief! We have time enough to waste in trifling conversation with silly fellow-creatures, but none to converse with God! Hours are thrown away in listless and unprofitable indolence, in useless reading, or in the eager pursuit of business or of pleasure; and those hours are not regretted. But who is there that finds prayer a delightful duty, a joy which he longs for when it is absent, and embraces with eagerness when it is given? Poor, blind, senseless human hearts! Go then to the Heart of Jesus, dwell in that Paradise, listen to that Teacher. Say to Him, as the Apostles said, when they had heard of the beauty and the excellence of prayer: "Teach us to pray;" teach us that language of heaven; open our minds to that science of the Saints; make our hearts esteem and love the gift which is so truly divine.



CHAPTER X.

UNWORLDLINESS.

In the world, you shall have distress ; but have confidence ; I have overcome the world. — JOHN xvi.

WHEN we approached the Paradise of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, we saw blazing over the portals, in letters of living light, the warning words : “ Learn of me, that I am meek and humble of heart ; ” warning words, because they told us plainly that there was no admittance for us to that garden of marvellous loveliness, unless our hearts were disposed to abide by the condition implied by them ; and that we should inevitably be ejected from its borders, the moment we forgot them. There these words stand as an eternal protest against the spirit that rules and reigns supreme in the region outside and around that kingdom of peace ; as a flaming sword forever flashing in the guardian Cherub’s hand, to bar the entrance against that

spirit and against all those who are subject to its power.

It is there, then, at the very doors of the Paradise, that the roads diverge, on which all mankind, in two great bands, make their journey towards eternity: some — and they by far the smaller band — enter under the glowing words, because their hearts are prepared to learn; they walk through the flowery paths, and eat of the sweetly-bitter fruits which heal and strengthen; whilst the greater throng passes by and pursues the broad road which leads away from Paradise and from God. The borders of this Paradise are, then, at the same time, the clearly drawn dividing line between the city of God and the city of Satan, between God's friends and those of the world, between the two hostile camps, whose war is implacable, because the spirit of each, their interests, their objects, are essentially repugnant to one another. There can be no truce, no compromise, no concordat between the leaders of these opposing armies. God cannot sacrifice to Satan; and therefore, He cannot yield to His enemy one

tittle of His glory, His rights, His sovereignty, His truth, or His all-embracing and all-absorbing dominion. And as there is war between the leaders, so there is war between the opposing camps; necessary, perpetual, implacable war. Whether we will it or not, we must fight under one leader or under the other; we must stand either on one side or on the other, and swear allegiance and fealty either to God or to the world. There is no neutral ground for us to stand on, aloof from the battle; no evading the law, which sends us all as combatants to the field. Our very existence here implies this necessity. For, we cannot exist, as we are, rational creatures of God, going through the period of our probation, without being either the servants of God or the slaves of Satan; friends of heaven by purity of heart, or bondmen of the world by sin. There are indeed many who change their allegiance; who are to-day on one side, and to-morrow, on the other. We may be in sin now, and return to God at another time. But there is not a single moment of our whole life in which we can

be neutral or between the two. We are, of necessity, combatants, as long as we live. The Prophet Job tells us that "the life of man is a warfare upon earth;" and our Lord says: "He that is not with me, is against me." (*Job vii.*, *Luke ii.*)

Now, therefore, though our timid hearts may sink within us, like the heart of the young soldier when, for the first time, he faces the foe; though our souls may flutter with fear at the thought of a life-long battle; yet so it is. We have only to buckle on our armor, to grasp our weapons fast and take our stand upon the field. It is war; real, earnest, relentless war.

Having thus fixed this great leading principle, we may now draw some conclusions from it. If the spirit of the world is so essentially opposed to the spirit of the Sacred Heart, that the one is eternally excluded from the other, may we not say that unworldliness is the characteristic mark of the Sacred Heart? May we not sum up in that one word, the whole spirit of that Heart, and say, that it is what it is and what we have

seen it to be, humble, meek, patient, brave, prudent, zealous, because it is unworldly? because its interests, its affections, its desires, its aims are diametrically opposed to the world? If it is at the very door of the Sacred Heart that the two roads of life diverge, one of which leads to God and the other to Satan, is it not evident that the whole object of our study of the Sacred Heart is to make us also unworldly and inspire us with hatred of the world? in a word, that this is the great lesson which our Divine Master wishes us to learn from Him? Truly, the very air of this Paradise is unworldly. Its flowers breathe a fragrance that is not of the world. Its fruits fill us with a life, a spirit unknown to the world, with a courage hostile to the world.

Shall we push our conclusions further? There are terrible things which flow from what we have said, and terrible revelations to be made. For, does it not follow that we have no share in the Sacred Heart, if there is worldliness in our hearts? that our hope of heaven depends on our being free from

the spirit of the world? on our hating the world, its maxims, its manners, its vanities? on our loving what it hates, and despising what it esteems? What then will be the fate of so many of us, whose hearts are divided; whose desires are for the goods, the esteem of the world, though they would also secure the joys of heaven; whose self-love, to say it plainly, is so foolishly excessive, as to think it but meet and just that they should have nothing but comfort and ease and enjoyment, and that it would be a crying wrong to subject them to any discomfort, humiliation or pain, either here or hereafter. The gospel must be accommodated to their softness and self-indulgence; and all that it says about penance, mortification, self-denial, trials, buffets, crosses, can never have been intended for them. They, surely, will never be cast out into exterior darkness; they cannot be spared from the great banquet of heaven. Poor souls! But self-love will not dictate the sentence of their doom; nor will their own high esteem of themselves be the rule by which God will judge them. The

Gospel is the word of Eternal Truth and the standard of Eternal Justice: that word shall not pass away; that standard cannot be changed. The Cross will appear at the last day as the symbol of triumph; and none but the friends of the Cross shall gather around it or share in its glory. All that we can say is, that the mercy of God is as boundless as His justice; that He is ever ready to forgive us when we repent, though it be with our very latest breath. But we are not at present dealing with souls of this kind; we are speaking to such as have entered the Paradise of the Sacred Heart, and desire to remain in it as the happy children of God. We are not satisfied with the dangerous chances of a tardy and frequently insufficient repentance at the last, but wish to be more truly followers of our divine Model, more faithful scholars of His Sacred Heart.

Well, then, let us be assured that in most of us the world is too strong, and the spirit of the world holds too great a sway. And since it is impossible to be near the Sacred Heart, whilst that spirit is in ours, it becomes

our first and most essential duty to banish the world and to hate it; to free ourselves from its tyranny.

The world, as St. John tells us, is the love of wealth, of honor, of ease. Riches, honors, pleasures, are the weapons it wields against God for the destruction of souls. The spirit of the world is the esteem of such goods and of all that tends to secure them; the contempt of all that is poor and lowly and painful; the fear of whatever may diminish or destroy the goods which it loves. The present is the centre around which all the desires of the worldly spirit revolve. It sees not the great hereafter, and cares not for its unknown treasures. Its only bliss is the possession and enjoyment of the earth; its only misfortune, the loss of temporal blessings. Give it the gold and silver, the pearls and precious stones of this world, and it asks no more. Let it be clothed in purple and fine linen here, and feast sumptuously every day, and it loathes all the promised delights of heaven. Place it upon a throne here, or raise it to some eminent rank among men,

and it aspires not to an immortal crown. Let it enjoy its present possessions for a long series of happy years of life, and it will not bestow a thought upon the eternity which is to follow. Its view is bounded by the horizon of this world: what lies beyond, it cares not to inquire. Its wisdom is the science of amassing wealth; its glory is, to outstrip all rivals in the race for the first rank among men; its very religion is the worship of self and of those on whom its fortune and its advancement depend. Its maxims are the expression of its desires and of its thoughts: "Blessed are the rich; blessed are the powerful; blessed are they that can triumph over their enemies and crush them under their feet; blessed are they that hold the highest places; whom all revere; whom all praise and extol. Blessed, in a word, they whose lives are a long, unbroken series of pleasures and honors upon earth. Nothing is worthy of our ambition but such goods; nothing to be dreaded but the loss of these treasures. He alone is great and happy, worthy of honor and esteem, who is preëminent among men,

and shines before them in talent, in wealth, in dignity." In such and similar expressions the spirit of the world is continually manifesting itself; and on such principles the world bases its actions, its laws, its judgments. All this is but a development of what St. John states in a few words: "All that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 *John* ii.)

Now turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and consider the spirit that rules its desires and aspirations. Listen to its maxims; study its wisdom. Can there be greater contrast than that which exists between it and the world? its maxims, its spirit and those of the world? Does it not reverse every judgment of the world's wisdom? The very first words which it dictated, when our Lord commenced his public life, are in solemn contradiction to every one of the world's maxims. "Blessed are the poor. Blessed the meek. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are those who suffer persecution." He bids us not resist evil, not seek revenge; bear insults

and injuries without anger or retaliation; not seek the praise of men, nor do our justice so as to be seen by men. He warns us against desiring the first places at the banquet, against the ambition of being called Master, and being pointed out, as we pass, to the respect and veneration of the crowd. He has no patience with the worldly-minded Pharisees. He rebukes them without mercy: and the sole cause of His bitterness is, that they represent the worldly spirit; they are, to Him, the embodiment of the world. They look only to the exterior; they give their alms ostentatiously, at the sound of the trumpet; they honor God by prayer and sacrifice, only when a great crowd looks upon them with admiration; they love to be saluted in the streets; to be called by men, Rabbi; to be placed at the head of the banquet; they are not, like other men, robbers, extortioners, murderers, but just and holy, and full of piety to God and to men; in a word, they are carefully pure externally; immaculate in the eyes of men. But the eye of God sees them interiorly full of filth, like

the sepulchres of the dead, reeking with corruption. And therefore, the only words which the Sacred Heart had for them, were words heavy with divine indignation: "Wo to you, Pharisees! Wo to you, hypocrites"! It is dreadful to read, in the Gospel, the words spoken to those unfortunate men; especially when we reflect from what Heart those words proceed; a Heart so full of compassion, so mild, so forgiving, so divinely meek. Yet, at the sight of worldliness, its zeal is enkindled with implacable wrath, and all its sweetness seems turned into the bitterness of gall. How deep then must its abhorrence be of whatever is tainted with the spirit of the world!

And therefore, when our divine Lord forms His disciples to the wisdom which He had come to teach, and which they were to teach in His name, His words breathe a spirit entirely contrary to the world. He has no regard for exterior advantages, for the pomp and glitter of outward appearances. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," He says to them: "Behold I send you as sheep into

the midst of wolves. Go, in simplicity and humility; take neither money, nor scrip, nor staff; seek not the support of the great. You shall be scourged in the synagogues; you shall be hated by all men for my sake. Be meek and humble of heart; be like little children, in artless innocence and unambitious modesty. But fear not men; announce to them the gospel of repentance; bid them do penance, and threaten them with the anger of heaven if they refuse or delay. What I tell you in secret, preach it from the house-tops. But fear them not; your weakness is your strength; your defeat is your victory; your death is your triumph. He that loses his life shall save it, whilst he that loves his life more than me, shall lose it forever." When He sees in their hearts an ambitious aspiration to be the first in His promised kingdom, He rebukes it even with harshness; because the spirit of the world, in His best friends, excites His anger. "You know not what you ask. He that will be first among you shall be your servant. He that is the lesser among you all, he is the

greater. Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." When Peter, in his worldly-minded zeal for his Master's honor, strove to dissuade Him from the voluntary humiliations which He foretold, He called him a satan and bade him depart from Him, because his zeal was worldly and his advice was dictated by the love of worldly honor and the fear of disgrace before men. For the riches of the world He has nothing but contempt: robbers can steal them; the rust can devour them. For those who were attached to riches, He has little hope. It was easier in His mind, "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Many and severe are the threats He uttered against the rich, and dark is the lot which He pictured as their's for eternity. Better far and happier is Lazarus, begging for the poor crumbs which fall from the rich man's table, than the proud glutton who spurns him from his door. If we desire to be His chosen fol-

lowers, if we aspire to the truest merit, to the perfection which will indeed make us great and honorable, the first condition is, "to go and sell all that we have, to cast away all the goods of this world; to reduce ourselves to utter poverty." Then, and then alone, will He receive us as His chosen followers; then will He give us a treasure in heaven. We may then say briefly, that the whole gospel is a protest against the world; that it preaches nothing but unworldliness; just as the whole spirit of the Sacred Heart was said to be summed up in the same one word.

And as the lessons, the maxims, the instructions which the Sacred Heart gave forth are all unworldly, so are all the examples of the divine life of our Lord. He cared not for the outward show of greatness or power, though it was all at His command. He, though the very centre of all that is great and glorious, splendid and magnificent, chose, of His own accord, and for our instruction, all that was lowly, poor, ignoble, contemptible, weak, and therefore, un-

worldly. His parents, His dwelling, His dress, His food, His companions, His occupations, all bear the same stamp; there is not a trace of the world in them. He, though Creator of the world and Master of all that is in it, came into the world and lived in it, and yet, He claimed not so much as a stone whereon to lay His weary head. He possessed not one foot of all this world's territory. He had no house of His own. His very food was the bread of charity. His winding-sheet was purchased for Him as an alms; and He slept in a tomb that had been prepared for another. Can there be anything more unworldly than such a life? Can there be a stronger protest against the spirit of the world?

It is true, then, that unworldliness is the character of the Sacred Heart, and is the great lesson which we are to learn from it. Then it is true, also, that the spirit of worldliness must inevitably banish us from the Paradise of the Sacred Heart, if it finds a place in our hearts. Then it is also most terribly true, that most of us are far from

having the dispositions required by our divine Teacher for admittance into His school of heavenly wisdom, for dwelling within the warm and safe precincts of His Sacred Heart.

Let us not deceive ourselves. We are worldly-minded; far more seriously affected by that dreadful disease than we suppose. A little self-examination will reveal this to us, and should make us tremble at the awful revelation. We breathe the air which is poisoned by the spirit of the world; we live in the world and in the midst of persons who are of the world. Our friends, our relations, our neighbors, are deeply imbued with worldly principles and ruled by worldly maxims. Are we courageous enough to resist this spirit, to triumph over human respect? Are we ready to receive the reproaches, the taunts, the raileries, the persecution with which the world has ever visited the true followers of its great opponent? What do we think of poverty, weakness, meanness of birth and occupation? What are the secret desires of our craven hearts, in regard to the riches, the honors,

the pleasures of this world? Must we not say, if compelled to tell the truth, that our hearts would be happy, if wealth were poured in upon us in full tide; if our names were written on the rolls of fame; if we were surrounded by the praises of men? What is our esteem of the gaudy show of dress and ornament, of amusements, entertainments, associations? Is it not a torment to us that we cannot equal the best in the land, in the number and magnificence of such worldly vanities? Do we not look back with intense regret to the "better days," when our houses were palaces, frequented by the gay, the rich, the fashionable, the great? when in return, we were welcome to the splendid mansions of our wealthy friends? when our days were spent in a round of fairy dreams of delight, each brighter than the last? What are the maxims by which we judge? Is God everything in our estimation, and the world nothing? the service of God our only duty, our only glory, our only happiness? How comes it, then, that we are so careful not to give God more than His due? that we are so much

hurt when told that this amusement is sinful; that reading not allowed; that visit not permitted? that we are so skilful in fixing the exact limit where duty stops and sin begins? How comes it that we have so many arguments and reasons to oppose a friend, a child, whose heart is drawn towards God and wishes to be entirely His? that we are more willing that those whom we love should face the risks of any worldly connection, than do what the Gospel and the Sacred Heart of Jesus declare to be alone worthy of a noble soul? the high privilege of those whom God destines to the loftiest thrones in His kingdom? We are then wiser than God; we pity those whom God loves and distinguishes as His best friends; we know better than He in what true riches and true happiness consist. Our ideas are not those of the Gospel; our maxims are not those of the Sacred Heart. Therefore, — and here is the dreadful revelation which is made to us, — therefore we are worldly-minded, our hearts are swayed by the spirit of the world; we lean towards the world; we are not true to God and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus;

we favor satan's camp; we wield satan's weapons against God. Therefore, we must quit the Paradise of God, depart from the Sacred Heart, and go to the world to follow the broad road in which the world marches to its destruction.

But, surely, we are not prepared for such a fate as this; we are far from desiring thus to turn traitors to the Heart which has loved us so much, and which we have begun to love in return. Then, let us learn to be unworldly like the Heart of Jesus. Let us bravely declare ourselves against the world and shake off its yoke. Let human respect have no power to shape our actions or direct our conduct. Let us love what the Sacred Heart loved, esteem what it esteemed, embrace what it regarded as real treasures; desire what it points out to us as true happiness. In fine, let us confide in it and fear not the anger of the world, which will hate us, because it hates Him who condemned it; it will persecute us, calumniate us, despise us. "But fear them not," He says to us, "in the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world."

CHAPTER XI.

UNSELFISHNESS.

I seek not that which is profitable to myself, but to many; that they may be saved." — 1 COR. x. 33.

THESE noble words of the great Apostle of the Gentiles show how deeply he had imbibed the spirit of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and the sentiment which they express, is one which could spring only from a heart most closely resembling that divine Heart. Forgetfulness of self to think only of the good of others, sacrifice of all self-interest on the altar of zeal for the glory of God, disregard of all personal considerations for the salvation of our neighbors, in a word, unselfishness, can be learned only from that Heart which is all for us, whose love for us has made it what it is, a model of every virtue, a holocaust of infinite value, a refuge from every evil, a Paradise of every delight.

It may not be amiss to dwell for a few moments on the need we had of this lesson;

to show how severely selfishness had wounded our hearts and how it still continues to be the very canker-worm which secretly eats away the best substance of our being. Selfishness is the first-born of that pride which brought on our ruin and all the sad consequences of our fall. From the moment of its birth, it fixed its seat in the heart of man, and it has since then held its throne there, and used all its power to banish from its presence every feeling of kindness, every impulse of generosity, every sentiment of compassion. It has ruled the entire nature of man, and all his powers, all his energies, have been its servants; and it has engaged them all in one great work — self-aggrandizement. “We shall be as gods,” was the first sentiment of mankind, when pride had produced selfishness in their hearts; and ever since, self has been the end of all human thought, of all human effort, of all aspirations, and self has been the source of all the crimes and abominations which have deluged the earth. Wounded self-love wielded the weapon in the hands of the first murderer. Blinded

self-love turned the hearts of men away from God to seek a false liberty and a deceitful happiness in the worship of demons and in the indulgence of passion, till the wrath of God was kindled to destroy them from the face of the earth. But selfishness outlived the Deluge and renewed its ravages. It armed brother against brother, son against father; it drove nations to war; it laid waste the fairest regions of the earth. Tyrants yielded to selfishness, when they governed with an iron sceptre and ground their subjects into the dust. Ambitious aspirants to power, guided by their selfishness, walked through seas of innocent blood to the thrones they coveted. Oppressors of every kind made the world a scene of misery, a wilderness of woe, with the tears of orphans, the despair of the plundered poor, the wailings of widows, the groans and lamentations of millions despoiled of their goods, their liberty, their homes and their lives. Selfishness has infected even the sanctuaries of civil and domestic life; and where Christian self-denial does not, to some extent, counteract its

poison, we find that the very civilities of life, the good offices of what men call friendship, the gifts of an apparent pity for the sufferings of others, are in reality inspired by self-love, which seeks, even by such means, to gratify itself and to secure its own ends under the disguise of unselfishness. And would to God that it had always been excluded from other sanctuaries more sacred than those! But it has found its way even into them and committed its ravages there. The world would not be what it is; the fruits of the Blood of Christ would not be so disproportioned to the infinite efficacy of that Blood, God would be better known, more loved and better served than He is; we should not have to deplore the loss to the Church of entire nations wrested from her bosom by heresy and schism; we should not have to acknowledge, with shame, that after two thousand years of Christianity, more than one-half of the earth is still covered with the darkness of idolatry and superstition; we should not witness, even in the Church, so much opposition of good men to one another, so much

dread in some lest others should do more than they or become greater in the esteem of men: these sad results, and others equally deplorable, would not exist, had selfishness not been permitted to produce them.

If we enter into our own hearts and examine them sincerely, without self-deceit, they will tell us the same tale. Selfishness is there, and perhaps there is little else. It is one of the most discouraging thoughts to one who desires the glory of God by the sanctity of souls, that this miserable self-love ruins and devastates perhaps the greater part of what outwardly looks like pure virtue and disinterested service of God. Self is king of our hearts, and whatever does not pay homage to it, we persecute with secret or open, but relentless hostility. There is no use in deceiving ourselves on this point. Self-examination may not be a pleasant occupation, but it is a necessary one, if we wish to know ourselves as we are and as God knows us, who will judge us, not by what we think of ourselves, but by what He knows of us. And this self-examination will reveal to us

that we are intensely selfish: selfish by nature; more selfish by indulgence; and the more selfish as we have been less conscious of being so. For, selfishness blinds us more and more as it grows.

Now, if this is so, if as the Apostle says, (*Phil. ii.*,) “we seek the things that are our own, not the things which are Christ’s;” then it follows, that the merit of our good actions is eaten away; there is an outward show which is fair, but there is no substance within. Our virtues produce only the apples of Sodom, which are tempting to look upon, but tasted, fill the mouth with the bitterness of ashes. Self-love, like a worm, has germinated within the good we were doing, and it has devoured the merit, leaving us the mere shell, which will crumble into dust when touched by the wand of God’s judgment; and we shall find ourselves poor when we thought we should be rich, and naked when we thought we were arrayed in the nuptial garment, we shall appear empty-handed before Him who has placed His talents in our keeping and who will cast us into

exterior darkness, unless we return them to Him with the interest which He expects.

Such is, in a few words, the condition to which selfishness has reduced us; such is the wound, deep and sore, which it has inflicted on our nature. And it is this wound that the Sacred Heart desires to heal. The wise love with which Jesus loved us, furnishes the remedy. The Paradise of His Heart produces the saving plant whose virtue will restore us to health.

Pride has created selfishness. Humility will render us unselfish. Unselfishness then springs from the humility of the Sacred Heart, and thus becomes, in some manner, the characteristic virtue of that Heart; and hence, of all the lessons given out by our heavenly Teacher, none is more important than that which He conveys by the words: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," (*Matt. xvi.*) This makes unselfishness an indispensable quality in the followers of the Sacred Heart, without which no one can remain in the Paradise of God. We must forget self; care not for our own ad-

vantage; we must yield to others; rejoice when they are preferred to us, when they succeed better than we; we must deny our own views; not insist on our rights; be considerate of the feelings of others; suffer inconvenience rather than subject others to it. This and much more than this is meant by the self-denial without which we cannot be perfect Christians and true disciples of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

But our Teacher is not satisfied with giving us this lesson in words. He is Himself the example of it. His whole life is a model of unselfishness. His Heart is not His own, but ours. His thoughts are all for us. His love is always devising new ways of proving its ardor and its sincerity. His time is not His, but belongs to those for whom He is come, --in a word, "He seeks not what is profitable to Himself, but to us; that we may be saved."

But let us take unselfishness in its several ingredients, and study each by itself in the Sacred Heart. One of these is, that it suffers inconveniences and strives to free others

from them. And of this the whole life of our Lord is an example. He is born in a stable, whilst others are comfortably or luxuriously lodged in the inns of Bethlehem. He helps His parents during the long years of His hidden life, becoming their servant, with more than a servant's devotedness and zeal. And in His conduct with His disciples, He is so meek, so condescending, that He can, at the end of His life, confidently say to them, "I have been in the midst of you as one that serves, not as one that commands." Though Lord and Master, He never sought to screen Himself from any labor or inconvenience; never claimed any privilege or exemption; but became the servant of all, that we might learn of Him to do to others as He had done to us; "for, I have given you an example," He says, "that as I have done to you, so you also should do." This unselfishness was the source of His patience with the rudeness of His disciples; of His unwearied endeavors to train them to the virtues which He desired in them, but which they were so slow in acquiring. Selfishness

was strong in their hearts, and it received many a rebuke from Him. Judas lost Himself by it and became a scandal and a disgrace forever. The other disciples contended among themselves for the first places; disputed about their rights and honors in the promised kingdom; and at the last, they abandoned their Master, because their self-love dreaded the conflict which fidelity to Him would have brought upon them. They had not yet learned that unselfishness yields its own rights to others, gives up its own opinions and claims nothing for itself.

This is another ingredient of this virtue, and in this too the Divine Heart is our model. Surely nothing could have been too much for Him, who was, by nature, Lord and Master of heaven and earth. All that this world could give of honor and enjoyment, of wealth and glory, was His due. But He asked for none of these, and refused them when they sought Him. The only right that He claimed as His own was, to be unknown and unhonored, to be poor and lowly and to labor for the good of others; "to seek what was prof-

itable to others, that they might be saved." "I seek not my own glory," He tells us; and His whole life bears witness to this. He does not permit Himself to be praised for the good He has done. He forbids the evil spirits to make Him known; when He has restored the dead to life, or healed the sick, He bids them let no man know it, or He conceals Himself from the joyously exuberant gratitude of those whom He has made happy.

If we go a step further, we shall come to another part of unselfishness, more difficult and painful, but in that Heart perfect in the highest degree. It is silence under injustice and undeserved reproach. Was there ever injustice like to what that Heart endured? Was there ever wrong either more grievous than it suffered, or more unmerited? Yet, not a murmur escapes it, not a word of complaint. It suffered as if it felt that all was just; as if it desired to screen its very oppressors from any accusation or suspicion of excessive severity. Self-denial could go no further. It sacrificed all—honor, reputation, friends, possessions, life itself, in a holo-

caust demanded, on the one hand, by unparalleled injustice, and offered, on the other, with the calmest serenity and divinest forgetfulness of self. Jesus on the cross is unselfishness in its sublimest perfection. The Heart of Jesus laid open, as if to pour out the very last drop of its substance, or to show that it has exhausted all its treasures for the ransom of His people, is a lesson of self-denial more eloquent than even an Angel's words could give. The mouth of that wound cries out to us: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you also should do." (*Jno. xiii.*)

And yet, after such a sacrifice and such an example — a sacrifice, offered solely for our cure, an example given with infinite love to compel our imitation — our hearts are not cured of their selfishness, and our lives, instead of bearing the impress of that example, are in perpetual contradiction with it. Who can tell how deep the wound must be which resists even such a remedy? But this obstinacy of our selfishness not to be cured, is not owing to the want of efficacy in the means

which the love of Jesus chose for our healing, nor shall we be allowed to enter this plea at the tribunal of our Judge and expect a favorable sentence, because the wound of our hearts would not be healed. The fault is with us, not with our Physician. It is our selfishness that prevents our cure. We will not bear inconvenience, discomfort, pain, reproach, humiliation. We will persist in our high opinion of our own merits, of our own ability, our talents, to the exclusion of all rivals. We will remain prostrate before the idol of self which we have set up in our hearts, and burn before it the incense of our admiration and sing the praises of our own excellence. And there, in that silent sanctuary, where none can hear us, we will repeat, day after day, that what we think is right and just, what we do is wise, what we advise is prudent, what we condemn is wicked or imprudent and worthless. We there rehearse the exploits of self and the praises spoken by others. We flatter the idol of our love and adoration with the thought of what it may yet accomplish, or compassionate it for

the unjust, blind prejudice and jealousy which will not see its merit or permit its full glory to shine forth before the eyes of men. Our conduct towards others is the reverse of what we have seen in our Model. We must always have the best. Let others take what we reject. Privileges and exemptions are ours by right; it were unwise in us to renounce them and to be, in all respects, equal to our brethren. Our lives, our health are too precious to be exposed to danger from the common labors, food, clothing and recreation, which may be sufficient for others less necessary than ourselves. Whatever others may suffer, we surely must be at ease; whatever may be said or thought of others, we are not to be blamed; our actions are always to be approved; our intentions are ever pure; our zeal is ever faultless, and our efforts are always successful, or if they are not, it is because envy or malice, or the selfishness of our unjust rivals has thwarted us and prevented the great good we should have done. All this is the very reverse of self-denial. It subjects others to inconvenience to screen self;

it disregards the rights of others to maintain its own unjust pretensions; it murmurs and complains of even merited blame, so far from bearing, in silent resignation, with malicious wrong.

Now, such a heart presents an almost hopeless case. The remedy indeed is not wanting, nor is its power deficient. But the selfish heart will not receive it. To cure selfishness, we should follow the maxim, that diseases are conquered by what is contrary to them. We should then submit to the pain of mind and body, to the humiliations, the discomforts, the reproaches and accusations which fall to our lot. We should think little of ourselves, and speak of self still less. We should esteem others better, more worthy than ourselves, and "love to be unknown and thought of no account in this world." But how can a selfish heart do this? Its very disease consists in its believing such remedies as poisons for itself, whilst it liberally dispenses them to others. Self-love has blinded it; bound it in chains. It sees not its own disease and believes itself full of life.

And if, at times, a suspicion arises that perhaps all is not right; if a ray of divine light penetrates its darkness and reveals some part of its wretchedness, there is no power in the will to apply an energetic cure. The eyes close again in blindness and the soul goes to sleep again in its lethargy, from which nothing seems likely to arouse it, but the final knell which will summon it to its doom.

There is hardly an evil in the spiritual life so difficult to cure as selfishness; and yet, there is hardly one which is more common or more disastrous. We who read these words, and we too who write them, may be deeply cankered with this evil and not know it. But if this chapter has, by the grace of the Sacred Heart, thrown one of those rays of irresistible light upon our souls, and made us suspect that selfishness is our tyrant and our destroyer, let us not lose this grace, nor shut our eyes lest we see our own ugliness as God sees it. Let us look upon it long and seriously, and look again and again, so that we may become thoroughly disgusted with our own wretchedness and hideousness, which

self-love has caused. If we can do this, there is hope of a cure. Then we can go into the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and there our hearts will gradually become unselfish like it. It will not repel us, because we are now humbled; and as humility grows within us, selfishness will decay and perish; and we shall be able to sing the canticle of our deliverance in praise of the divine Heart to which we are indebted for the happy liberty of the children of God.



CHAPTER XII.

POVERTY.

You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that being rich, He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty, you might be rich. — 2 COR. viii.

THE Paradise of God is a region entirely different in its aspect from what we see in the world around us. What is beautiful and precious here, is of no value there; and what is there esteemed as a treasure and a glory, is here dreaded and shunned as a calamity and a disgrace. The Sacred Heart of Jesus has already given us many instances of this contrast between its spirit and that of the world. Let us now study another lesson of the same kind, a lesson which it has always been most desirous to teach us, on account of its paramount importance for the good of our souls. It is the lesson of Poverty: a lesson so hard for our hearts to learn, and yet most necessary for us, if we would be the true disciples of the Sacred Heart.

Our hearts are, by nature, covetous. Our Creator Himself has made them so, but for a loving and saving purpose. He has planted in our hearts a longing for good; an intense, all-absorbing desire to possess good; a desire which controls our entire being, informs all our actions, prompts all our aspirations, and governs all the powers of soul and body. At the same time, however, He bids us turn this desire towards true and lasting good. "They who would become rich, fall into temptation and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men in destruction. For covetousness is the root of all evils." (1 *Tim.* vi.) He bids us love true riches, strive for eternal goods, lay up treasures in heaven, where no thief can plunder, no moth nor rust destroy. (*Matt.* vi.) But our hearts have been deceived by the false goods of this world, and have turned their longing upon that which appears to the senses, instead of desiring, through faith and hope, the hidden treasures of the future life. Our hearts have become unwisely covetous and waste their love upon objects unworthy of

their heaven-born aspirations. And hence, a disorder in our entire nature; whilst all our desires pursue a phantom instead of a reality, and all our endeavors are directed towards the possession of what is really an evil, instead of being a good; and our entire being is controlled by a senseless, feverish love for treasures which serve only to sink our souls into perdition. How great is the folly of the human heart! how deplorable the infatuation which has seized upon it! Who would believe us were we to relate that there is, in some remote region of the earth, a populous nation of refined manners, polished taste and perfect education, but whose members, great and small, old and young, spend their whole lives and employ all their energies in catching at the bubbles of the sea and endeavoring to secure them unbroken, as most precious gems? Yet, what are all mankind struggling for? To what end do all their endeavors tend? What do they esteem? For what do they sacrifice repose, life, all? What do they secure? What do they possess, and what sweetness do they

draw from their possessions? Truly all is vanity of vanities and affliction of spirit, and mankind is mad — beside itself with a folly which would be laughable, were it not the cause of interminable ruin.

Here then is another deep wound of our hearts which the Heart of Jesus desires to heal. And again we shall see the wise love of that Heart forgetting itself, sacrificing itself, giving us the example as well as the precept, lest we should fail to be cured. The Sacred Heart, then, is our model of poverty, our teacher of what we should love and desire to possess. And so well does it know the depth of our wound, the violence of our folly, that its very first lesson is a lesson of this virtue. “Blessed are the poor in spirit;” that is, blessed are they who bear poverty of earthly goods without complaint; who care not for the wealth of the world. And its very first example too is an example of poverty. Our first, involuntary exclamation, at the contemplation of His nativity is: How poor! how utterly despoiled of what the world calls riches! The straw, the crib,

the swathing-clothes, the rents in the roof, the bitter blasts, all cry out: How poor! how poor is the God of all good, the Possessor of all treasures, the sovereign Lord of the earth and of all that is in it! And the next thought, if we choose to reflect on the wonder before us, will be: How and why is this? The answer is twofold: it is because He loves poverty and because He wishes us also to love it. To Him poverty is a coveted prize, a pearl above all value, a treasure which He had not found in heaven, but which His all-seeing eye had discovered in this distant world, where it lay unknown and undesired. To secure this treasure, He gave up all His heavenly possessions; His throne, His crown, His glory, His joys and His honors, the songs of His angels and the splendors of His royalty, all was laid aside, that He might come down to this desert world to possess the pearl which men would not esteem. And here we behold Him at His entrance into His new possession. He has seized upon His treasure and His Heart is happy; happy in the rags which cover

His shivering limbs; happy in the straw which pierces His tender body; happy in the cold blasts which play so rudely around Him; happy in the poverty of His parents, in the lowliness of His first adorers, in the utter coldness of His welcome to His own world and to those whom He comes to save. His Heart beats with boundless joy at all this, because it loves poverty, and it now enjoys this boon in all its perfection.

Having thus secured His prize, He never gave it up; its beauty seemed to grow the longer He possessed it; and His love for it grew with its beauty. For, such is the nature of true treasures; the more we know them, the greater is our esteem of them; the longer we hold them, the more we enjoy, the more we love them. Not so with the false joys of earth, or the seeming treasures of the world. They glitter at a distance, and pale when we approach: they dazzle for a moment and then lose their brightness; they promise to make us happy whilst we have them not, and when we have gained them, they leave the heart void, or make it

heavy with their burthen of care and with the consciousness that happiness is not with them. We have been deceived; we have labored hard for what is not worth possessing; we have given much and have received little; and though men may give us joy at our good fortune, our own hearts cry aloud, that peace and joy are gone, along with all else that was good; sacrificed in vain for the acquisition of what can not make us happy.

But the treasure of the Sacred Heart remained a joy to the last. That pearl did not lose its beauty or its value; and therefore the Sacred Heart was, at all times, happy in its possession. Follow it from Bethlehem to Egypt; from Egypt to Galilee; through the cities and villages of Palestine, through all its history of hidden and of public life; you will find it ever clinging to its poverty, ever happy in the enjoyment of this new treasure. It was because His Heart loved poverty, that He chose the workshop of Joseph for His abode, that He labored with His hands for His support. The same love

drew Him towards the poor followers whom He chose as His companions; it sent Him, clad in the garment of poverty, without staff or scrip or money, on His mission to the poor; and one of His strongest proofs of His divine authority and His heavenly origin, always was, that He preached the gospel to the poor. For, as He loved poverty, so He loved the poor. To them His Heart expanded; for them were His miracles multiplied; on them was His love poured out.

And as for Himself, so for His Church after Him, the poor are a warrant of truth; and she alone, who loves the poor as He loved them, bears the mark of His spouse and continues His mission on earth. She, who loves poverty as He loved it, and who ranks it among the highest and best gifts, who holds it out as the token of heaven's special predilection, and an earnest of the most abundant reward; she, who like Him, continually repeats the words: "Blessed are the poor; go sell all and give to the poor, and come and follow Me; they who have

left all to follow Me, father, mother, brother, sister, house, lands and all that they possessed, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall have life everlasting;" she, in whom poverty is sanctified and perpetuated as the surest and happiest means to gain the only wealth that is worth desiring; she alone is the mother of God's children, she is the true spouse of Christ; in her alone is all our faith safe against error, and all our hope secure. The same spirit is in her; the same Heart beats in her bosom. She clings to the cross as He clung to it. Its poverty is her glory, as it was His. It is her ideal of true greatness, of the perfection of all virtue, and the triumph over all the powers arrayed against her and against her God.

The poverty of the cross! Can there be greater poverty than that? Is there anything there of which He can be despoiled? Yes! there is something which can be taken from Him; but he alone who has learned from the Heart of Jesus to love poverty, will be tempted to covet it or to take it to himself. For, all that we can take from

Him there is the crown of thorns, the nails which pierce His hands and feet, the cross itself on which He is suspended. These we can take to ourselves; and if our hearts could learn from His what value these possess, how highly they are prized in heaven, we should eagerly go and crown our own heads with the thorns of His poverty and fasten our own hands and feet to His cross, to be poor with him and to suffer the contempt of the world in our poverty for Him. Blessed are the poor who are crucified with Him; whom the world hates as it hated Him; whom it strips of their possessions; whose very garments it divides among its votaries, and whom it sends to die like Him whom they love, in poverty and ignominy for His sake!

Come now once more to this wounded Heart; come to it, you whose hearts pant for the possession of happiness, but seek it where it is not to be found. Surely, the Heart that loved us so much, would have pointed to worldly wealth as a worthy prize, if it had the power to render us happy.

You cannot doubt either the wisdom or the power or the love of a Heart which for your sake is what you here behold. It knows what is worthy of your desires, what is real good. It could not have been made poor as you see it, had it willed not to be so. It is what you see it to be, simply and solely for your good. Then, how can your heart yearn after the trifles of the world? How can it love what the world calls wealth? How can it waste its life away in the struggle to acquire what is so utterly worthless? Here you can have no doubt that other treasures than those which men esteem, are alone capable of filling the void within you; that the longing for bliss implanted in your soul by its Creator, must look elsewhere for its contentment. Here is a Teacher whose wisdom is divine, whose love cannot lead you astray. If He is true, then the world must be false. If He does not deceive you, then you have been deceiving yourself or the world has betrayed you. And if you wish to be wise, you will fear and hate the riches which the Sacred Heart of Jesus tells you

are a snare for the destruction of your soul.

“Lay not up treasures in this world,” it cries out to you; “take heed of all covetousness. How hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven! You cannot serve God and mammon. The deceitfulness of riches chokes the good seed in the heart and leaves it without fruit.” These are His lessons, oft repeated; and His own life is filled with their spirit; His example, from His birth to His death, is full of the same doctrine. It preaches the wealth of poverty, the glory of poverty, the power of poverty, the eternal triumph of poverty.

And yet, we have not learned the lesson. Our lives might be taken as a proof that we trust Him not; that we know better than He what is for our good; that our faith in Him is not sincere. To us poverty is the heaviest curse, the greatest evil; the poor are the most unhappy, the most despicable of men. Our one grand life-battle is against poverty. To be satisfied with a competence is to me and spiritless; to renounce the gifts of fortune, a stupidity and a folly.

But shall divine wisdom be thus rebuked? shall we forever act as if God were unworthy of our confidence? shall the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which loved poverty and blessed the poor, plead in vain with our hearts? shall we perhaps be content to make profession of poverty, and flatter ourselves that we are the genuine disciples of that Heart, whilst we abound in comforts and will bear no refusal of what our souls desire? Compare your condition with that of the poor Master whose counsels you profess to follow. Is it not a contrast rather than a comparison? a contrast of sentiments and ideas, of desires and of fears, as well as a contrast of realities? You have and must have what He had not and would not have. You dread what He desired and love what He despised. How then can you be His follower? And what can your profession bring you but a more grievous condemnation?

Let us then learn of the Sacred Heart to be truly poor. Let our hearts become like it, detached from earthly things, happy in poverty and in the privations and discom-

forts, in the humiliation and contempt which are the attendants of poverty. Then we shall be rich with the wealth of imperishable goods, we shall be royally poor as that Heart was, and thus enter into the possession not only of the hundredfold promised here, but also of the life, the true life, the eternal life, which is the portion of its loved ones hereafter.



CHAPTER XIII.

CHARITY.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love.—JER. xxxi. 3.

IF there were in nature some single flower adorned with all the beauties, and enriched with all the fragrance which we admire in the countless blossoms of field and forest; if there existed some one privileged plant containing, in itself alone, the thousand-fold healing virtues of all others; or some gem sparkling in its solitary glory with the combined rays of ruby and diamond and sapphire and all other precious stones: we might regard such a marvellous ornament of nature as an emblem of that virtue of the Sacred Heart which is now to be the subject of our consideration; — a virtue which alone equals all other virtues, in which they all unite, and from which each derives its being, its beauty, and its merit. For, what is not found in nature, is found in the glorious

Paradise of God, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Its Charity is that blossom in which the loveliness of all other flowers is centred; that salutary plant to which belong all health and vigor; that gem which dazzles us with the collected beams of all the varied graces with which heaven has enriched the Heart of its King.

We have seen the Sacred Heart meek and humble, obedient, prudent, brave, patient, poor, unworldly and unselfish; but in all this we have seen only its charity. It was its love for us that made it humble and meek and prudent and zealous and all that we have seen it to be, and infinitely more that we shall never know, till we see it in its unveiled loveliness in heaven. Charity, like a great central sun, has but turned upon us its manifold aspects. It was humility in one, meekness in another; then obedience and patience, and all the other glories in succession. But the light, the warmth, the life and the vigor, all came from the same central fire, "ever varied, yet ever the same."

And therefore it is, that whilst we con-

sidered each separate virtue, we might have thought that it alone had been the sole aim of our heavenly Teacher; as if His whole life had been intended for the practice and the teaching of that single excellence. This we might have thought, because, in each phase turned toward us in succession, it was the entire force of that love which shone upon us; it was with all its mighty love for us that the Sacred Heart was meek and humble and prudent and obedient; with all its uncontrollable yearnings for our good that it practised and preached the virtues which we were to learn, and by which we were to become its conquest and its crown. Is not the Sacred Heart of Jesus but another name for the love of Jesus, the symbol of His love? And are not the virtues of the Sacred Heart, the virtues which His love for us made Him practise, that we might share its merits and resemble it by our imitation?

We have then reached the very centre of this Paradise, and we can gaze around on all its manifold treasures at once. From this spot, we command the whole region, vast and

varied as it is. We stand at the fountain-head whence spring the bright streams which carry life and verdure, and health and beauty, to the utmost bounds of this garden of delights. Here we might rest forever, bathed in the soft sunshine of that glowing love, drinking at this life-giving fountain; and inhaling the divine fragrance of the many-colored blossoms, feasting upon the wealth of the various fruits, which bloom and ripen under the rays of that sun, along the streams which flow from that wondrous fountain. For, this love is divine, and therefore infinite in its being, in its ardor, in its beauty, in its wealth; and eternity alone would suffice to make us know it, and to pour out upon us all the joy, all the bliss that it contains.

In the Sacred Heart of Jesus is gathered together all the intense and eternal love with which our Creator has loved us: creative love, combined with that awful foreknowledge, which from all eternity bathed us in the light of God's manifold attributes; preserving love, together with the golden chain of Providence by which our Maker holds us

suspended to His fatherly solicitude; redeeming love, with all the sadly beautiful mysteries of the divine life on earth; sanctifying love, with the great fountain that pours His blood, in seven living streams, through all the members of His mystical body; glorifying love, with all the untold wonders of throne and crown and sceptre, and of royalty shared with Him in His heavenly kingdom for evermore. All this is contained in the Sacred Heart; and this is its charity; this the love with which it has loved us.

Heaven and earth, nature and grace, time and eternity, have poured into this capacious Heart the love with which God has enriched them for our good. Love comes to it from every tiny blossom and leaflet of forest and field; from every drop of nightly dew and evening shower; from every note trilled by the painted bird; from every blade of grass and every fruit; from the snowy mountain and the dark green valley; from the deep blue ocean, from majestic rivers and from gentle brooks and glassy lakes. All is love

for us and all bears witness to His love. The sun pours that love into His Heart; the starry heavens speak of its love.

And far beyond the starry vault, the glad Angels are forever singing, and forever marvelling as they sing; "Behold how Jesus loved them!" But infinitely farther still beyond angelic hierarchies, our venturesome flight must carry us, to find the true source of the love which is contained in the Heart of Jesus. For, He has loved us "with an everlasting love," a love which comes in a mighty current from its source, beyond the utmost bounds of creation, the bosom of the Eternal Father, and which fills and floods that only Heart which may contain it all, and yet pour it all out upon those whom it loves, in ever-flowing streams of pardoning, consoling, sanctifying and saving mercies.

Far back in the unreachable eternity of God's solitary and self-sufficing glory, before created existences had been drawn from His all-knowing mind, where all lay dormant as mere possible beings, this Heart of Hearts was burning with love for us. For, even

then, the Eternal Word was loving us, and His love was to be symbolized by the Heart of Jesus. God knew us then, He saw us in all the checkered variety of our future lives, sad and sinful, or weakly virtuous, or generously faithful, as we should make them. But He saw it all in the mellow light which that love cast upon us; and, under the magic transforming power of that love, He could but see us as His beloved children, He could but bless us for the sake of Him who loved us. The bitterness of our ingratitude was sweetened by His love; the harshness of our rebellion was softened by His obedience, and the hideous deformity of our sins was veiled by the beautiful purity reflected on us from the Heart which was already accepted as our ransom: whilst our poor service, our unsteady loyalty, or even our most generous sacrifices, all unworthy as they were of Him, were gilded and adorned and made glorious by the rays which fell on them from the Heart that was ever burning before the face of God.

Is it not marvellous that we can think

such thoughts, believe such mysteries, and live? that the awful weight of an eternal love does not crush us? that the fathomless ocean of infinite love does not engulf our weak nature? And yet, we know nothing of the true depth and intensity of the love which has so strangely encompassed us from eternity. Cold words from cold hearts can give no idea of it; even a seraph's language, warmed with a seraph's ardor, were insufficient to express it.

The Sacred Heart of Jesus, therefore, means all this magnificent, ineffable, eternal and infinite love for us. It is the great ocean which contains this love; the deep fountain which forever pours it out upon us. It is far beyond human and angelic intelligence; and our occupation for all eternity will be to learn more and more of it, to dive deeper and deeper forever into its blessed depths. We must not expect to fathom it even then. What, therefore, can we do now? How dare we speak of it at all, when we should simply look up in silent wonder, and with bated breath, and live entranced at the bewildering

thought that such a love has deigned to touch us.

But the Sacred Heart of Jesus has revealed to us some of the characteristics of its love, and these we may consider; on these we may feast our own love for it, and learn how to make some return, though ever so feeble, for its surpassing tenderness and amazing condescension.

The Sacred Heart loves us, and therefore it *thinks* of us. We have already seen that it thought of us before we existed, and loved us "with an everlasting love." This has never ceased for a single instant. Whether we consider His pure and essential love alone, as it was in the Divine Word before all ages, or view it as concentrated and nestled so tenderly in that human Heart which He created expressly to love us; we were ever there, lying in the sweet sun-light of that love, and personally, individually known and loved and blessed and sanctified and saved by its compassionate liberality. Ages before we came into being, while myriads of zealous angels were serving Him,

while countless human souls on earth were the objects of His sleepless solicitude, while the full tide of His own essential blessedness was inundating His entire Being with untold delights; His love could still occupy itself with us and send forth a calm, serene, constant ray of golden light to search us out and rest on us as an earnest of His glorious predilection. And still that golden light is on us, now that He has called us out of nothing, only intenser, richer, more magnificent than before.

For, now there is mingled with it the light of another love; the love which not only thinks of the beloved, but *labors* for him. The creative act, the providence which preserves our existence, may, in human language, be called the labors of God's love for us: and the seat of God's love for us is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But remember once more the life of that heart on earth, and His labor for us will appear in a tenderer and softer light. It was labor for love of us when He shaped and fashioned that Heart which was to be all for us; that body and soul

which were to be the instruments of our redemption. It was labor for us when He assisted His Blessed Mother and St. Joseph in their humble toils. His many foot-sore journeys over the mountains of Judea, through the sandy wastes of the deserts, His miracles and His teachings were labors for love of us.

Add to this another trait of His love, and all that He has done for us becomes more precious still: He was and is ever *studying to delight* us; to surprise us at every turn by some new device, some greater grace, some more signal proof of His tenderness. His unlimited power was exerted to produce those wondrous works, which His equally unlimited wisdom suggested at the promptings of His ever-zealous love. Whether we look upward at the resplendent heavens, or down into the depths of earth and sea, or all around us over the glowing face of nature; whether we consider the events of our own brief existence and the wonderful chain by which He has united our lives to His own Heart; the graces which He has vouchsafed

to us in common with others, or the special mercies which shine like so many jewels in each individual life: what can we say or think, but that the Heart of Jesus is too prodigal of its love; that it is lavishing its treasure where more stinted liberality would be more highly valued.

But that Heart loves us too truly to think of aught else; and hence it evinces another proof of its ardor, by *unceasingly enriching* us with new and greater gifts. It was an immense condescension to think of us forever; but how His favors grew as they came nearer and nearer to us through the mysterious cycle of God's free acts outside of His own Being, by the giant strides with which He came forth to run His race: the creation of the visible and invisible universe; the Incarnation of the Divine Word; the institution of His Church and her sacraments; our own individual existence with all the tender and deep mercies which have attended us. And then the future! When our little lives are breathed out and our little services ended; oh! who can tell what our glad surprise will be,

our breathless amazement, when He will take us to His bosom, welcome us to His heavenly Paradise, and bid us look around on all its beauties and all its treasures, and call them our own forever! Such is the love of His Heart for us, enriching us with all it can give, and when it has given all, rejoicing that it is all ours and that it makes us so overflowingly happy.

And if, at least, it could have foreseen, on our part, a loyal fidelity, a warm return of gratitude! But here is another and more wonderful trait in its love: an *unwearied patience* with our waywardness, an inexhaustible *readiness to pardon*, an unconquerable resolve not to be offended or turned away. Pardoning love, pardoning not once, but a thousand times; pardoning not slight faults, but crimes of the darkest dye; surely, this is such love as can be found only in a Heart that is divine.

And this leads to another and deeper fountain in the Sacred Heart, whence flows the love which *suffers* for the beloved. For, if He pardons us, it is by virtue of His Heart's blood poured out for us from un-

numbered wounds, that the dark guilt of our sins is cancelled and the sentence of our doom, written for the thousandth time by our own acts, is changed into a charter of our royal adoption. Love for us led Him to Calvary, and displaying before Him the horrors of those ignominies and tortures and death, asked if His Heart could endure them for such as we were to be? We know His answer:—it is written on His hands and feet; it is engraved on His brow; it is cut deeply on His Heart.

The human mind can conceive no greater, deeper, truer love than this. But there is something still beyond this, and we already possess it, though we shall enjoy it in its unclouded fulness, only when Faith dies out in the blaze of charity. It is the last and crowning effort of love: the *gift of its entire being* to the beloved. This gift the Sacred Heart has already made of itself to us in the stupendous mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, and made it with a truly divine magnificence and liberality, and at the same time with a wisdom which unites the fulness of the gift

with the possibility of merit for the period of our probation, and reserves for the bright day of our reward, not indeed a greater gift, but a more glorious, a more royal display of its infinite value. Now He is veiled, then He will be visible in all His beauty. But now as then, He is wholly ours, and the union of His Heart with ours is most intimate and most divinely complete. He cannot, God though He is, give us more; for, He has given us Himself. He has loved us to the end; for, He has gone the full length both of His wisdom and of His power in devising and executing this marvel of His love.

Is it possible, then, that seven such streams of joyous, bright, heavenly, divine love should flow upon us and not take our very sense away, for the intensity of their sweetness? that we should know and feel that we are thus loved by the Heart of our God, and yet be able to sigh for the affections of creatures and beg a poor comfort from their love? Should not the mere thought of that Heart suffice to make our whole life one summer's

day of sunshine and happiness, and flood our souls with a bliss which no sorrow could ever lessen or destroy? Can we believe that the Sacred Heart is wholly ours, most intimately united with our hearts, and pouring into them the full torrent of all its tenderness, and yet be able to divide our hearts and give it, in return, only a share of our love? Can we be made childishly happy for days and months and years by some poor token of affection lavished on us by a creature, and yet be insensible to the burning intensity, the boundless exuberance of a love which is eternal and divine? Surely this is a wonder as great as the wonder of that love itself; a sad wonder of human ingratitude to a divine Heart which has loved us to excess; an ingratitude which keeps the sharp thorns ever fast in the Heart of Jesus, and its deep wound ever fresh and ever bleeding, and presses from its inmost core the ever-repeated complaint: "Behold the Heart which has loved mankind so faithfully and so well, and which receives from them only coldness and indifference in return."

Let it then be our duty to console the

divine Heart for this coldness; for our own coldness in the past and for the indifference of others at all times. And this we shall do by making our hearts warm with a tender, a personal love for our Lord. "In my meditation a fire shall flame out," says the Royal Prophet. (*Ps. xxxviii.*) If we desire to light up in our souls this flame of personal love, we must contemplate our Lord in His actions, His mysteries, His lessons, His examples, His sorrows and His sufferings. We must, as it were, live in His company, see Him before us, hear Him, receive His blessings and listen to His instructions, as if we were with Him and He with us. We must gaze into His divine countenance and dive deep down into His Heart. And this meditation will most effectually, most sweetly constrain our hearts to love Him, to love only Him, to love nothing but for Him and in Him, to hate nothing which He loves, and thus, at last, make to Him a sacrifice of our entire hearts, with all their affections and all their desires; the greatest sacrifice which we can make, the only one which is, in some way, worthy of Him.

CHAPTER XIV.

BROTHERLY LOVE.

This is my commandment that you love one another, as I have loved you.—JOHN xv. 12.

THE Sacred Heart of Jesus had been burning for three and thirty years with intensest love for the poor lost race of Adam's banished children whom it longed to restore to their forfeited inheritance. It had poured out, from its deep fountains, streams of gracious wisdom and of heavenly truth; of divine compassion to console the sorrows of men, of resistless power to heal their numberless woes. But a moment ago it wrought that wonder of wonders, that stupendous miracle of truly infinite power and love, which makes the earth the envy of heaven itself by its own abiding Presence. And a few moments hence it will shed a bloody dew upon the young grass of Gethsemane, and then well forth its full tide of salvation under the lashes, the thorns, the

nails, the lance, till not a drop remains in its broken fountains. Its visible earthly life is ended. But its love shall never die. And now, as the last and best instruction, as the brief and all-embracing moral of its many lessons, as the single precept in which all its wisdom and all its virtue are abridged, it gives us this commandment of love, which it calls its own, its new commandment, bidding us "love one another as it has loved us."

And indeed, what could we expect but such a commandment from a Heart which is all love for men? which has no other desire but to spread its own flames over the earth, and make all hearts glow with its own fire? Were not all its pulsations love for us? Were not all its actions prompted by love? its words dictated by love; its lessons inspired by love for us? its whole being permeated by love; its very essence composed of love? What then could be the word which would express it, and tell us all that it is, all that it desires and commands, but love? This is my commandment; this one word conveys to you all my wishes; this

single precept tells you your whole duty as my disciples: Love one another as I have loved you.

Brotherly love, therefore, is the aim of the Sacred Heart's lessons to us. All its virtues tend to this object and cluster around this centre. Brotherly love is the one great duty which it imposes on us; the badge by which we are to be distinguished as its followers. "By this shall men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." (*John* xiii.) Brotherly love places on our brow the mark of predestination; signs us as the children of God; gives us the title-deed to a share in His heavenly Paradise. Brotherly love divides mankind into children of light — those whose hearts possess it; and children of darkness, who know it not. Love and hatred are the two standards under which mankind march, in two great armies, towards eternity. The elect are headed by a bright banner on which a flaming Heart is emblazoned, and the device, "Love as I have loved," in letters of living fire. They march hand in hand, a loving brotherhood, with

heaven's smile shining on their united ranks and gilding the path along which they advance towards the portals of heaven. The other army follows another standard and marches in disordered masses, with hatred, jealousy, revenge, as the moving power which impels them. Darkness broods over their advance, and their path is strewn with the sad evidences of their contentions and strifes, where unyielding self-love has crushed a rival, or treacherous revenge has been glutted with the blood of its foe. Their leader is he who was a "murderer from the beginning," whose very name is "Hate," and whose cruel delight is to destroy the souls whom he deceives. But they see him not in his hideous deformity. His standard is obscured, and shows not the motto with which he declared his revolt against his Lord: "Hatred of God; destruction of His glory by the ruin of mankind."

Here then we have an infallible touchstone to test our character and discover the true condition of our souls. St. John, the Apostle of love, will give it in his own

inspired words: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." (1 *John* iii.) "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God. God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him." (1 *John* iv.) St. Paul teaches the same doctrine more than once. "Bear one another's burdens, and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ." (*Gal.* vi.) "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (*Rom.* x.) "Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection." (*Col.* iii.) If then our election to glory depends on our observance of the law of God, and if the whole law is comprised in the single precept of brotherly love; this will be a sign to us; this will be a glimpse into the secrets of the book of life. Do you love your neighbor; do you pardon his faults; do you assist his indigence and console his sorrows? You are a child of God; your name is written on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the book.

of life; angels are weaving your crown in heaven, of the interior and exterior acts of charity to your brethren. You have passed from death to life; you are fulfilling the law; you are observing all the commandments of God; your lot shall be among the Saints.

But if your heart is hardened against your brother; if you do not love him, not merely in words, but in deed and in truth; if you hate him because he has offended you; if you close your heart against the cry of the orphan and against the widow's tears; if you turn away with disdain from a rival and pour out your bitterness in proud reproaches or in cowardly slander; oh then, poor soul! your name is enrolled under Satan's banner; you are a murderer, "and you know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in himself." (1 *John* iii.) You have broken the great law of charity, therefore you have revolted against all the commandments of God; your eternity shall be in the flames prepared for the devil and his angels.

But let us ask the Sacred Heart itself for its lessons of brotherly love. We have seen

its own charity for us, its everlasting love, and the marvellous inventions by which it shows its sincerity and its ardor. We might complete its character by adding, to what we saw before, the many beautiful touches of the Evangelists, when they show us that loving Heart healing, pitying, consoling, defending, excusing, pardoning all; when they express its character by the words of the Prophet: "The bruised reed He shall not break, and the smoking flax He shall not quench. He shall not contend nor cry out; neither shall His voice be heard abroad. He shall not be sad nor troublesome;" (*Is. xlii., Matt. xii.;*) when they record His promise "that not even a cup of water given in charity shall fail of its eternal reward," and His forbearance with the wicked whom He suffers to thrive, like cockle among the good grain, till the harvest-day of eternity compels Him to separate them forever from the elect. All this and more we might gather from the gospels to heighten His beautiful character and show His Heart full of mildness, tenderness, compassion, mercy, pardon, beneficence, love. And

surely after all this and all that we saw before of His Heart's charity, and all that we know remains to be seen, but not exhausted, during the endless ages of eternity; after all this, we cannot refuse to listen to its lessons, to receive its commands on this virtue of its predilection.

Truly, the entire gospel is a law of charity, a commandment of love. It could not be otherwise, since its fountain-head is the Heart of Jesus. "Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the peace-makers. Blessed are they that suffer persecution without resistance or revenge:" these are among the first words which came up from the loving Heart of Jesus for our instruction. In the same breath He tells us that "whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment." He will not accept our offering nor listen to our supplications, so long as there is resentment against our brother lurking in our bosom. "Go first and be reconciled, and then come and make your offering." He solemnly and forever annuls the ancient law, which gave

“an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth ;” and with equal authority proclaims His new commandment: “I say to you not to resist evil ; but if one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him also the left. Give to him that asketh. Of old it was said : hate thy enemy ; but I say to you, love your enemies ; do good to them that hate you ; pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.” (*Matt.* v.) On these conditions He will receive us as children of God, as disciples of His loving Heart. He goes so far as even to deprive us of the power of appealing to heaven in our own behalf, unless we banish from our hearts all hatred of our neighbor. For, if we pray to be forgiven, whilst we ourselves do not forgive, we call down vengeance on our own heads by saying : “forgive us as we forgive.” And he adds : “If you will forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will forgive you also ; but if you will not forgive, you shall not be forgiven.” (*Matt.* vi.) “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. For, with the same measure

with which you shall mete, it shall be measured unto you again.” (*Luke vi.*)

All these lessons of brotherly love were given at His very first appearance as our Teacher. And what is this but reducing the whole law to the one precept of love; making the whole affair of our eternity depend on this single point? It is as if He said to us: Though your sins were numberless as the sands on the sea-shore; though your iniquities were redder than scarlet; your soul shall become whiter than snow, if you forgive your enemy, if you love your brethren. We have God’s own word for a favorable sentence at our final judgment, if our judgments of others are charitable and mild and forgiving. We are sure of heaven and of all its eternity of untold blessedness, if we keep this one commandment: “Love one another as I have loved you.”

The same lesson is conveyed to us again and again in His beautiful parables, on which our souls might hang forever, like bees in the nectar-cups of their favorite flowers, and sip heavenly sweetness, divine charity from their

inexhaustible treasures. The good Samaritan is given us as our model, and heathen though he may be, he is declared the approved of heaven, whilst the truth-possessing Levite and the Priest of God's holy Temple are condemned for their cruel neglect of a wounded and bleeding brother. (*Luke x.*) The truth of God in the mind and the law of God on the lips cannot profit us by themselves; whilst the charity of God in our hearts seems to supply all other wants, or to be a warrant of their fulfilment before our doom is pronounced.

The fate of the hard-hearted servant who would not release his fellow-servant from a trifling obligation, though he had himself been forgiven an enormous debt by their common master, enforces the same great law of charity; and the parable concludes with the terrible as well as consoling words: "So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not your brother from your heart." (*Matt. xviii.*) Terrible words indeed are these to the relentless and unforgiving, whose proud revengefulness hardens

them against the voice of their Sovereign Master; but consoling to those who, knowing the multitude and the heinousness of their crimes, and fearing the just punishment of an angry God, hear, with joy, that their debt can be so easily and so completely cancelled.

This consoling assurance, not only of unreserved forgiveness, but also of our eternal possession of heaven's bliss, and the lesson of charity for our neighbor, flow again from the words of our Divine Saviour when predicting the closing scene of this world's history. There again, mankind are divided into two great armies; the one marshalled at the right hand of the Judge, the other at His left; the one destined to endless joys, the other doomed to eternal woe. And the sole plea, the entire justification of the elect, is made to consist of their works of charity; whilst the only crime imputed to the reprobate, the sole cause of their hopeless condemnation, is their want of brotherly love and charitable condescension to their suffering brethren. "Come, ye blessed of my

Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you; because you fed the hungry and gave drink to the thirsty; you visited the prisoner and consoled the sick. -- Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; because you sent away the hungry unfed from your doors; you turned a deaf ear to the cries of the afflicted, and hardened your hearts against their distress." (*Matt. xxv.*)

Such is the Sacred Heart of Jesus; such its charity and the lesson which it wishes us to learn from it. But this is not a new revelation to us. We have known it for years. We have read it a hundred times in the Gospels. We have heard it a hundred times proclaimed by the ministers of God. For two thousand years has that sweet commandment resounded over the whole world; and it was the sovereign will of the Creator made known to His creatures; it was the sole service which He required of them; the one condition He imposed for His favor. And yet, what has been the history of mankind during all those ages, but a record of hatred and revenge; a story written in blood,

with here and there a brighter page of gentle actions and patient endurance, of saint-like forgiveness and of God-like beneficence in return for most grievous wrong!

But let us forbear to waste our indignant wonder on this disheartening spectacle of brothers' cruelty to brothers and of human rebellion against the lightest and most blessed of divine commandments. Go rather into your own hearts, disciples of the loving Heart of Jesus, and there read the more discouraging, but more useful history of your own neglect of the same most necessary obligation; and learn, at last, to be more worthy of the name you bear.

The Sacred Heart says to us as it said to all: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you." But we cry out by our actions, if not by our words: "We cannot forget; we will not forgive!" We can bear no affront; submit to no wrong; endure no unkindness, ingratitude or scorn from another. A harsh word has been spoken to us; an unkind remark has been made about

us to another; our actions have been blamed; our motives suspected, our failings and follies held up to ridicule. And our whole soul is filled with bitterness against the offender. Never shall he share our favor; never shall he be looked upon with aught but rancor and contempt. "Forgive," whispers the voice of grace to our heart; "forgive," cries out the Gospel from its every page; "forgive, as I have forgiven you," meekly, tenderly pleads the Sacred Heart which has loved us so divinely. And yet our hearts are unsubdued; our anger and resentment will not die. We will brood for years over a slight injury, frequently over an imaginary wrong. We will nurse hatred, a very viper in our bosom, to sting us and poison our lives with unhappiness. Nay, we will brave all the terrors of an unforgiving death-bed, and madly defy the anger of Him who cannot but cast us away, if we hate Him in our brother. And yet we would call ourselves Christians! Perhaps even we would be followers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus! Perhaps we would dwell with such hearts in the

very house of God, and make some of His own chosen ones the objects of our unforgiving resentment!

And if sometimes, through fear of utter reprobation, we endeavor to persuade ourselves that we have truly forgiven our persecutors and calumniators, yet how often is this forgiveness insincere! We say that we have pardoned; that we bear no enmity and seek no revenge. But we cannot restore our former friendship; we do not give back our confidence; we will not speak kindly to him whom we no longer hate. "Forgive us as we forgive" is your daily prayer to the God whom you have outraged by a thousand crimes: it is your own daily condemnation as well. You shall be forgiven as you forgive; but God will not restore His friendship and His gifts; He will not admit you to His royal mansion nor allow you to sit at His heavenly banquet, save in that measure with which you have forgiven. You are kind to those who are kind to you; you love those who do you good. Pagans can do as much and as well as this; yet Pagans are cast out

into exterior darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Examine the judgments you pass on your brethren, either in your own mind or in your conversation with others. "Judge not and you shall not be judged" is the maxim of the Sacred Heart. What is your conduct? Perhaps your proud self-love can see no good in others. Even when compelled to grant them some merit, you instinctively search for a flaw or a defect; and you feel a secret pleasure when you have discovered it and pointed it out to others. Yet you know that you shall be judged as you have judged your neighbor, and that "judgment without mercy is reserved for him who hath not done mercy!" (*Jas. ii.*) You know that without the charity which "thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, which believeth all things and hopeth all things," even the highest gifts are of no avail before God. (*1 Cor. xii.*)

And in the correction of your brother's faults your "zeal is bitter," as your judgments of his actions are unkind. If you

were animated with the charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, you would compassionate the weak, sick, wounded sufferer whom you find by the way-side; you would pour the oil of charity and the wine of true zeal into his wounds; you would raise him gently in your arms, and seek for a shelter and for every means to restore him. But perhaps you pass him by with unfeeling pride, as if you would say that he is justly punished for his own imprudence, and deserves to perish in the danger which he could have avoided. You are then a Pharisee, one of those against whom even the Heart of Jesus was forced to utter so many and such heavy anathemas! Your justice is a false justice, a hypocritical virtue, since it is full of bitterness for a fallen brother; whilst true justice and real virtue would weep over him, and turn its anger only on the guilty cause of his fall.

Let us then learn of the Sacred Heart this greatest of all virtues. Let us obey its own and only commandment. "Love, as I have loved," is the compendium of all its teachings; the motto containing all its wisdom.

“Love, as I have loved,” is inscribed on its banner; and if we desire to remain in its service and to share in its victory, we must fulfil this duty and express this motto in our conduct. Peace will then reign in our hearts, together with the surpassing joy which peace brings along with it. We shall be the children of our heavenly Father, shedding the sweet, genial sunshine of brotherly love on all alike, because we shall love all for His sake and in Him, who alone is worthy of love, and who has loved us and all mankind with an everlasting love.



CHAPTER XV.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire? Thou art the God of my heart, the God that is my portion forever.—
Ps. lxxii. 25.

THE everlasting love which has been pouring its golden light upon us; the love of the Eternal Word for us which has been beaming on us, in varied rays, ever since we entered into the glorious Paradise of God, is indeed the highest, the crowning excellence of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. But it is so, only in so far as we regard the Sacred Heart in its relations with ourselves. There can be nothing more beautiful, more sublime, nothing more precious or more divinely magnificent than that everlasting love, lavished as it has been on such as we were foreseen to be. And, therefore, we might rest here and say that our task is accomplished. We might fix our abode in this centre of the Paradise, as though we had explored all its delightful

confines, tasted its every fruit, and viewed, with glad wonder, its every bursting or full-blown flower.

But we should not know the Sacred Heart, as we may know it in our present state; we should not see all its riches and its beauties, even as it is given us to see them now, "as it were through a glass, in a dark manner," if we did not go one step farther to view its Love for God.

This is truly the last and best excellence of the Sacred Heart. This is the deep channel that pours into its human merits the divine fulness of grace. Love for God is the true solution of all the mysteries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Love for God is the brief history of its life, the essence of its being. Love for God is the golden link which unites that human Heart to the Divinity of the Eternal Word. We see the same great central sun, with all its dazzling splendors and all its fiery heat, converging, not now on us, but heavenward upon God. The beams are the same which shone upon us in the many-colored lights of the virtues

which the Sacred Heart practised for love of us; the heat is the same, which encompassed us from all eternity; but now both light and heat tend towards God, and reveal to us the entire secret of all the virtues, the excellence, the very essence of the Heart of Jesus. * In other words, it loved us in God and for God. It loved us, that it might woo and win our hearts for God. It loved us, and it was meek, humble, patient, forgiving, obedient and prudent, because it was necessary for us to be like it, that we might be worthy to love God eternally. It loved us, and therefore it poured out its blood as our ransom, because only by such a redemption could our hearts become the conquest of God's love. Then all its love is love for God; all its virtues were created by its love for God; all its history is told in one word: Love for God.

Its love went forth from God, like the sun, to run its bright career. It gilded the angelic nature with its early magnificence, and shone upon the race of men with its softer, gentler, sadder rays; but when its course is run and its treasures have been poured out,

in heaven and on earth, to the remotest limit of creation, it returns to its source and reposes in God. Its love, like a conqueror, sallied forth from the battlements of heaven, to subject the world to the dominion of its Sovereign and to bring all creatures in humble adoration to His throne. It heeds not the hardships of the campaign, the wounds of the battles. Death has no terrors for its devotion to the glory of God. It fights, it dies; but it conquers in its death. And then it returns to the city of God, bearing its trophies and leading its captives in triumph, a happy throng of the redeemed, and lays its laurels and its crowns at the foot of that throne for whose honor alone it labored and bled and conquered in death.

Nothing can make us understand more clearly, that the love of God and the love of His creatures for His sake, is one and the same principle, than this view of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. They spring from one another so necessarily, they mingle together so intimately, they touch each other, intersect each other in so wonderful a manner,

that we cannot separate them or make of them two distinct loves. Charity is a bright band which unites heaven with earth, God with His creatures. In so far as it touches the earth and embraces the creature, it is brotherly love; but as it unites them to heaven and to God, it is nothing but love for God. It is the golden ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, and on the summit of which God rests and looks down, with fatherly yearning, on His distant children. It is charity for our brethren where it touches the earth; but as it ascends towards heaven and leads us to our Father's bosom, it is again only love for God.

Such was the charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It had seen God in all the loveliness of His beauty, in all the magnificence of His glory. It had drunk deeply of the torrent of His love. It had kindled a sacred flame at the burning furnace of the infinite love which glows upon His throne. Now, love is not love, unless it acts; and love is not great or ardent love, unless it does great things for its beloved. What limit then shall

we expect to find to the action of an infinite, a divine love? The Sacred Heart, therefore, burning with infinite, a divine love, must prove its love by a boundless zeal, an ever-consuming ardor for Him whom it loves. It must burn with a divinely restless activity for the glory of God, and be ever eagerly looking for means to promote and increase it.

Hence we have seen it, with the eye of our faith, ages before creation had sprung into being, placing itself, like a Lamb, upon the altar of divine Justice, as the victim for the sins of an unborn race. Hence we heard the clear, sweet music of its voice, when there was as yet no created voice in all the wide domain of heaven, as it spoke those words to the Majesty it would propitiate: "Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not; behold, I come to do thy will, and thy law is in the midst of my Heart." Hence, too, even when countless myriads of zealous Angels were sounding aloud the praises of their Maker; even when Mary's sweeter than angelic song ravished the ear of God with its melody; that clearer, sweeter voice still

rang out above all other notes of praise, thanksgiving or resistless intercession, whilst the Heart of Jesus was pleading for our hearts and making them like itself, that they might do worthy homage to the God whom it loved.

And when this unhappy world of ours had become the prey of God's sworn enemy; when God's glory had become an exile from the creation which had been given it as its own, when nought went up to heaven from the earth but sounds of blasphemy and cries of blood: Oh! then was a field offered to the love of the Sacred Heart, to its zeal for the outraged Majesty of God. Then it must sally forth to reconquer for God the creation which His enemy had usurped and in which he had set up his altars in mockery of heaven. We have seen it in its battles; we have beheld it in its blood-stained armor; we have gazed on its deep wounds and heard its sad wailings in its sorrows. But it was loving God with an unconquerable love. It must triumph, though at the cost of its very life, at the price of its very last drop of saving and sanctifying blood.

Our hearts were the prizes for which it fought, the spoils which it won. It loved us, it saved us, it washed us from our iniquities. But it loved us for God; it gained us for the glory of God; it cleansed us, that we might stand before God and praise Him for the love which loved Him and made us happy for love of Him.

It was the same ever-active love of the Sacred Heart for God, which would not be satisfied with driving Satan from the throne he had usurped, with reconquering the earth for its lawful Lord and restoring His authority and His kingdom in the hearts of men. It would hold its conquests, garrison the citadels it had won and forever exclude the usurper. And behold! a wonder of love for God, which surpasses all other wonders; a device of divinely ingenious zeal for the glory of God, which will forever be an unfathomable mystery to angels and to men! That heart itself has become the guardian of its conquests. It is itself the sentinel that watches, night and day, on the battlements of its fortresses. Its own impenetrable armor

shields the walls of the city which it has made the City of God and against which all the malice and the power of God's enemies shall ever be exerted in vain.

The earth must be God's and the fulness thereof; it must be a glorious temple dedicated to the honor of its Maker and echoing His praises at all times; sending up to heaven, from morning till night and from night till morning, a ceaseless canticle of joyous adoration, of thanksgiving worthy of His most royal munificence. But how could human voices raise such a song? The Sacred Heart itself, then, remains in the temple which it has erected; and now, from ten thousand altars, its music rises and penetrates the skies, till it rings along the vaults of heaven, a worthy homage to the Eternal God from the realms of His redeemed creation.

The life of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, is a life of love; it is one never-ending act of love; love for God and love for us in God and for God. It burns on our altars, like the watch-fires on

the mountain-tops, that our hearts may have a signal and fly to their refuge and be secure against every danger. It dwells in its lowly tabernacles, like a hermit in his solitude, that it may avert all evil from us by its ever-acceptable intercession. It lies in ambush there, to catch the souls of men as they approach and make them happy by becoming its captives. It comes forth at our call, to shed its blessings upon us and to enrich us from the boundless stores of its heavenly treasures. It bleeds as our victim every day, "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same," to atone for our sins and give back our lost inheritance among the sons of God. It comes even into our bosoms, with all its fiery fervor and all its infinite graces, to transform us into its image, to enkindle its flames in our hearts, and to teach us, here in our pilgrimage on earth, the love which will be our reward and our bliss in our home beyond the skies.

But all this, though it is immense and inconceivable love for us, is at the same time and essentially love for God; since it all

tends to increase His glory by our greater love, by our more abundant redemption. It is love for God which keeps that wonderful Heart a prisoner on earth; love for God makes it insensible to the cold solitude in which it is abandoned; to the heartless ingratitude which it meets from so many; to the outrages committed in its presence; to the insults heaped upon it by the scoffing unbeliever and by the yet more guilty, because consciously ungrateful and sacrilegious believer in this divine mystery of its love.

We have then reached the last solution of all the wonders of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the formal and final cause of its whole life, of its very being, and of its eternal subsistence in the glorious immortality of the Sacred Humanity united to the Word of God. "God is love," says the Apostle of love, who had leaned upon the bosom of Jesus and had drawn his inspiration from His loving Heart; God is love, and the Sacred Heart is the love of God, the fire which is kindled to consume whatever is not love for God, and to trans-

form it into love, and thus bring all things back to their origin, so that God may be in all, and all His creatures in Him, all made one in Him and with Him, through the glowing intensity of His love, through whom this blessed oneness was effected.

Heaven will reveal to us what these words mean. For, heaven is nothing more than understanding their meaning; and heaven will be heaven eternally, only because we shall be eternally understanding them better. For, God is love, and God is our heaven; and to love God, to revel forever in His love, is our only bliss, the sole essential beatitude of the elect.

And now perhaps we can understand, better than before, that charity is the queen of virtues; the highest excellence; the one virtue which survives all others; which begins on earth, but accompanies us to heaven and is there crowned with immortality. We can understand how charity is the nuptial garment, without which we cannot sit at the banquet of the great King; how all else is worthless, even the tongue of an angel, the

knowledge of all mysteries, the sacrifice of all possessions and the holocaust of life itself, unless charity informs them and pours into them the golden substance of its merit.

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God: this is the greatest and the first commandment;” this is the end and the perfection of the law and of the gospel. This is the great lesson which the Sacred Heart teaches us; the one lesson in which all its other lessons are summed up, and to which they all tend. If we would be truly the disciples of the Sacred Heart, and reward it for its labors in our instruction by learning what it teaches; we must aim at this queenly virtue in all that we do. We must be humble for love of God; meek and obedient, prudent, zealous, unselfish and unworldly for God’s sake, because we love Him and desire to love Him more, and thus merit to love Him forever.

The Sacred Heart reveals itself to us, glowing with love, surrounded by flames of fire which signify its love for God. It gathers us around itself, that it may light these flames in our hearts and make them glow like itself

with love for God. We behold its deep wound; but flames of love pour out from that open mouth, as though it would preach to us the love of our God. The thorny crown which encircles it and the cross which rises above it, are enveloped in the same holy fires, but are not consumed; to tell us, more plainly than words could tell, that all the virtues which are typified by the cross and the thorns,—the humility which bears the ignominy of Christ; the obedience which dies with Him; the patience which prays for its enemies and its persecutors; the poverty which strips us, like Him, of all earthly goods; in a word, our whole imitation of our crucified model,—must be reddened by the divine glow of charity and ascend to heaven gilded with its light and borne upon its ardor.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST LESSON: THE SCIENCE OF THE SAINTS.

Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart. This is the greatest and the first commandment. — MATT. xxii. 37.

THOUGH eternity alone can reveal to our ravished spirits all the beauty and magnificence of the divine love which glows in the Sacred Heart of Jesus; yet, it will not, it can not make known a higher excellence, a better gift, a more precious virtue. Behold then, disciple of the Heart of Jesus, as well its own supreme dignity and merit, as also the end and aim of all its teachings. To love God is the science which we are to learn; it is the science of the Saints. To love God is the privilege offered to us here; a privilege so great and so glorious, that we should never cease to wonder at its being granted to such as we. To love God is a duty imposed on us as a necessary condition of our future happiness. “Thou shalt love

the Lord, thy God: this is the great commandment:" a commandment in which all others are contained, since our Lord tells us that "he who loves Him, keeps His commandments;" and St. Augustine says: "Love God and do what you please;" because if you love Him, you cannot displease Him, you cannot do wrong.

A wonderful commandment is this! wonderful in itself; more wonderful in its simplicity; but most wonderful in the glorious boon it bestows on us. It is wonderful in itself; for, who could have believed that such a commandment would ever have been required? that we, who are nothing but what God has made us; we, whose existence, life, health, fortunes, bodies and souls, with all their enjoyments here, and all their hopes for hereafter, are pure gifts from the liberality of God, granted to us that did not deserve them, and continued to us even when we had forfeited them a thousand times by sin; that we should be compelled by a strict commandment to love a God who had done so much for us! Yet, so it is. Such is the

perverse selfishness of our hearts, such our natural ingratitude, that God must threaten us with the full weight of His eternal wrath, if we do not love His most amiable, most indulgent, most liberal Majesty. So intense is His longing for the love of our poor hearts, that He lays patient siege to them for years, surrounding them with the multitude of His favors, graces, blessings, and then waits till our stubborn hearts capitulate to His love; whilst, day after day, He sends His heralds forth to warn us that we shall be lost forever, unless we yield to His fatherly dominion and consent to be ranked among His beloved children! O wonderful God and wonderful commandment of His love!

But consider the commandment in its simplicity. It is but a single word — love. One duty is pointed out; one condition proposed: “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart.” And what else can we do with our heart but love? and what can our hearts love but good? and who is good but God? Can it then be difficult to love Him? Can we help loving Him? Must we not do

violence to our hearts, in order not to love Him? And is there indeed nothing more to be done to gain heaven, with all its endless and inconceivably magnificent happiness, than this most simple, most easy, most necessary love of Him whom we can not help loving? Can it be that this one word expresses all our obligations, contains the entire legislation of Religion, and sums up all the revealed will of God in our regard? "They that love the Lord will keep His way. They shall be filled with the law, and in His sight they will sanctify their souls." (*Eccli. ii.*) "We know that to them that love God, all things work together unto good." (*Rom. viii.*) God has promised "the crown of life to them that love Him." (*Jas. i.*)

But if this is so, how comes it that God is loved so little; that the hearts of men can love anything but Him; can fasten upon objects entirely unworthy of their affections; cling to miserable creatures, and have nothing but coldness and indifference for Him who is all good, all amiable and alone worthy

of love? It is because we do not know God, we do not think of Him; we do not see Him in the thousand blessings He is daily shedding upon us. We pass Him by unheeded in our pursuit of vanity, and leave Him to mourn in His solitude over the blindness of our hearts. Did we but know God as we may know Him; did we but see Him as He is pleased to show Himself to those who desire Him, our whole soul would be on fire and cry out: "Lord, who is like to Thee?" Our whole heart would burn with intensest love for Him. His greatness is illimitable. His beauty is the light of heaven, the eternal bliss of angels and of men. His goodness is infinite; His liberality inexhaustible; His mercy is above all His works. His Being is a boundless, fathomless ocean of all that is great and glorious, magnificent, rich, beautiful, sweet, noble, blessed and beatifying. There is no shore on which we may land; there are no soundings in this resplendent sea of the Being of God: and His Being is His love, His power, His goodness, His mercy, His beneficence, His countless infinite perfec-

tions, in which we may lose ourselves forever, and forever find new and greater and sublimer and more ravishing delights. But who shall tell us what God is? Who can reveal His greatness and His love? Eternity will be too short to see it all; to taste all the sweetness, to count all the treasures, to enjoy all the bliss that He is. Yet He has given us glimpses of His glory in the gifts He has lavished on us. "The heavens shew forth the glory of God," (*Ps. xviii.*;) and His invisible magnificences are manifested by their effects in the visible creation around us. (*Rom. i.*) It is God that enlightens us in the sun; that cheers us with its genial warmth, and delights us with the varied beauties of field and forest. God's power is in the mighty storm. His goodness is shown in the endless stores of the teeming earth. His hand paints the petals of the flowers, shapes their tiny leaves, and fills their cups with honeyed fragrances. His breath ripens the fruits of vines and trees and waving grain. His strength and His sweetness are hidden within them to nourish and refresh us. And

what are we, in soul and body, but living monuments to attest the goodness of God? Our souls are His gift; they live and act, they know and feel through Him. Our eyes see with His light; our tongue speaks with His motion; our hands labor and our feet walk with His power. It is our God and our Father that lays us down to our rest at night and closes our eyes in sleep, while He watches through the night at our side and holds His mighty hand over us to protect us from harm. It is our God and our Father who gently arouses us when He gives us another day to enjoy His blessings here; and who goes with us to our tasks and helps us to do them. "For in Him we live and move and have our being." (*Acts xvii.*)

But all this and all else that men and angels could tell us, is as nothing to the reality of what God is in Himself and to us. Are we then indeed to love such a Being? Are we to call Him, the Lord, *our* God? Can it be true that such hearts as ours may dare to love Him? Ah! here is the reading of the enigma of this wonderful command-

ment. For, who would have been bold enough to aspire to the love, nay to the very possession of such a God, if the sovereign commandment of that God had not compelled him? Behold then the glorious privilege granted us by this most wonderful commandment. O ye hearts of men! "how long will you be dull? Why do you love vanity and pursue what is false?" (*Ps. iv.*) Listen to the word of your God; learn your dignity; understand the glory which is yours if you but will it. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God." Your heart may burn for that great beauty, and hope to possess it all and to enjoy it forever. You are allowed, urged, pressed to offer your affections at the shrine of heaven, to the heart of heaven's all-holy King; and you are assured that your offering will be accepted, your love returned with infinite ardor and rewarded with an eternally blissful union with Him! Nay, do not smile incredulously at what you hear. It is no fairy-tale of an impossible fortune that is told you. It is the truth of God Himself, made known by His own word; it is the glorious

charter of your royal adoption, of your eternal espousals, written on the living and loving Heart of Jesus. Yes, you are permitted to love God. Though you are the poorest, the weakest, the most ignorant, the most despised of men, nothing can deprive you of this privilege. You have only to will it, and God is yours; the great and living God is wholly yours, blessedly yours, for time and eternity. Yours is His power, His greatness, His glory; yours His bliss, His sweetness, His ineffable delights. For, this is the meaning of His wonderful commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole Heart."

It is evident now that this love is the highest, the best, the last lesson of our heavenly Teacher. Nothing can go beyond a union with God — and that is love. Nothing can be better than the possession of God: — and that too is love. Nothing can be added to the happiness of the heart that is sure of God's love for eternity: and therefore there is nothing to be added to our knowledge when we have learned the lesson of this

love. Nothing is better, higher or beyond God: and God Himself is Love. To love God eternally is the bliss of heaven: to love God here is to change earth into heaven, and to anticipate, during our exile, the happy occupation of our eternal home. Love makes bitter things sweet, and hard things easy. It feels no labor, because it loves whilst it labors. It delights in hardships, because they are proofs of its sincerity. Its sunshine is never clouded, because it gazes forever into the face of God. Its peace is unbroken, because it fears no evil and is stronger than death itself. Its happiness is undiminished, because it reposes securely on the warm bosom of a Father who is the very fountain-head of every joy.

Such is the new commandment, the law of love, written by the finger of God on the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And with this new covenant the Sacred Heart descends from heaven to earth, and proclaims to men the sovereign will of their Creator, and makes them the offer of his love. It comes as a pilgrim to the shrine of men's hearts and

lays the great love of their God before them as the price of their affections. It comes as the herald of a mighty Monarch, who seeks and longs to unite Himself to our souls. Can you turn a deaf ear to such an appeal? Can you resist, hesitate, refuse to yield? Can your heart remain closed, like a citadel that will not be conquered, though the spoils of the victory would all be your own? In other days, that divine Herald spoke to the hearts of men, and asked them if they would refuse to love their God? And from the hearts of men the answer went forth. "Not we," cried countless thousands, who till then had loved vanity and pursued fleeting shadows—and now they embraced the folly of the cross; they bowed their necks to the yoke of the Gospel. "Not we," cried out the great army of the martyrs: and they stood fearless before tyrants; they groaned in prisons; they bled on racks; they stained the sands of the arena under the teeth of wild beasts; they suffered with smiling countenances all the tortures that malice could invent; they died with a song of triumph on their lips; because their love

sweetened their torments and crowned them in death with the laurels of immortal victory. Nor did they resist the appeal of the Sacred Heart, or refuse the offer of its love, who, charmed by its beauty and drawn by its divine fragrances, followed its guidance into solitude, where the glitter of worldly vanities could not disturb their peaceful enjoyment of the wonderful privilege conferred on them. Millions of generous souls, won by the gentle power of that loving Heart, yielded themselves captive to its charms and vowed their undivided fealty to the love which had conquered them. And since love is not love unless it acts, unless it suffers and makes sacrifices for its beloved, those generous souls were ever eager to prove their love; ever inventing new means to testify their devotion; ever seeking precious offerings to lay at the feet of their God. Their life was, to labor for His glory, to make known His greatness and His goodness, to proclaim His will; to cry aloud to the unfortunate children of the world, that they too could love God and enjoy all the

sweets of His love. They would lay siege to the obdurate hearts of men and win them for God; compel them to throw open their long closed portals to His love. O happy warriors of the love of God! happy conquerors of hearts which God so ardently longs to bring under His loving dominions! Who can tell how glorious is your service, how magnificent your reward! Who can conceive the transports of divine delight with which God looks down on the hearts which you lead to His love and on you who have added them to His conquests! This proof of love is the perpetuation of the love which burned in the Sacred Heart of Jesus during His mortal life on earth; its ally and assistant in its silent, saving life on our altars, whence it sends forth the shafts of its love to wound the hearts of men. They that have once felt the sweet pain of its love, can find no rest but in making themselves hunters after other hearts and wounding them too with the same love. It is the perpetuation of that love of the Sacred Heart for God, which brought it down from heaven, after having been, from all eternity, in the pres-

ciency of God, the victim of love and the sacrifice of reparation. Therefore it is the most perfect imitation of the Sacred Heart. It is to us, as to the divine Heart, the jewelled band which unites our souls to God. It is the golden ladder by which we mount till we repose on the bosom of our Father.

But it is not for human language to explain the height, the depth, the power, the sweetness, the riches of the love of God. The heart must feel it, must glow with its intensity, to know it, not in all its glorious extent, but in a fulness which no words can tell; with a magnificent assurance of its future and unclouded revelation. Suffice it for us to know at present that the love of God is the one great, all-absorbing feeling of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the secret of its being; the source of its virtues; the mainspring of its actions, its sufferings, its life and its death; that this is the one great lesson which we are to learn from it; the virtue in which all others are contained. It is the summit of perfection; the highest excellence to which our nature can aspire. Suffice it to know that the love of God

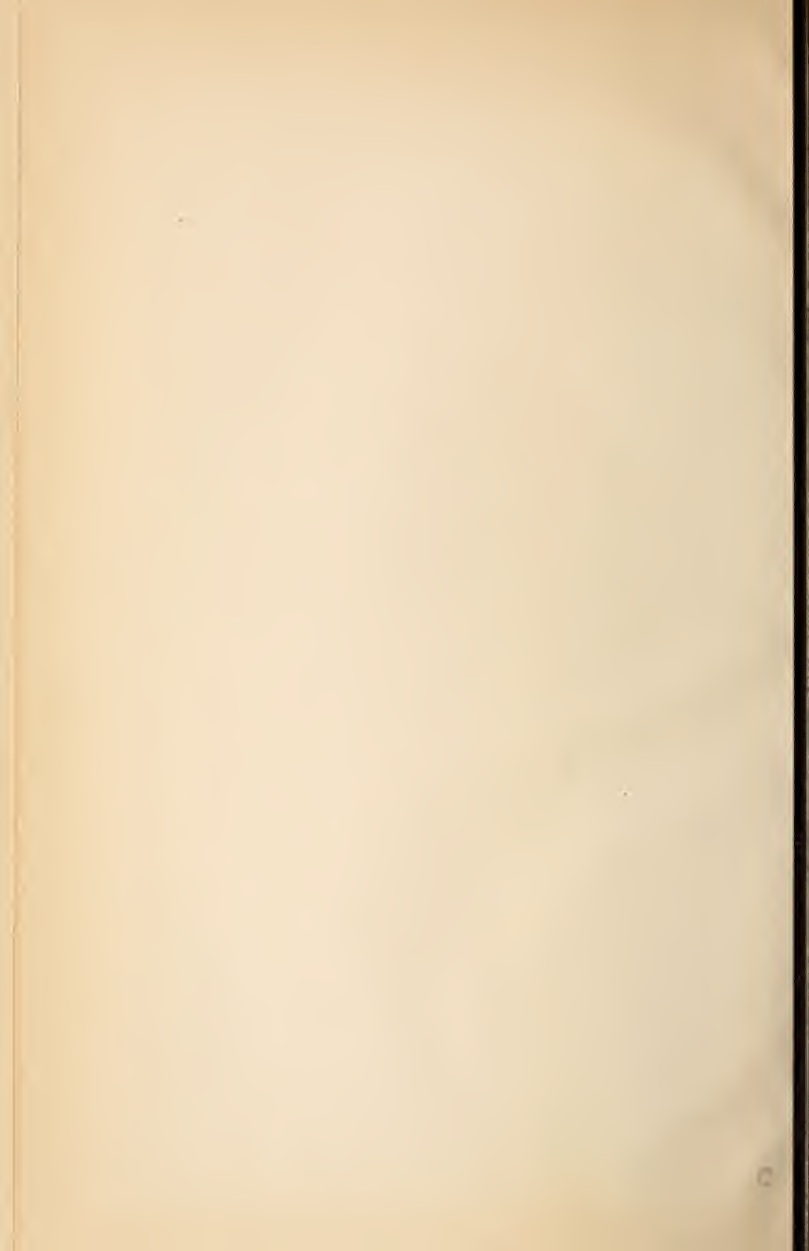
restores us to the Paradise we had lost, and gives back to us the happy life which Eden once witnessed, when God and His angels were the familiar friends of man, and the language of heaven was understood and spoken by the dwellers of earth.

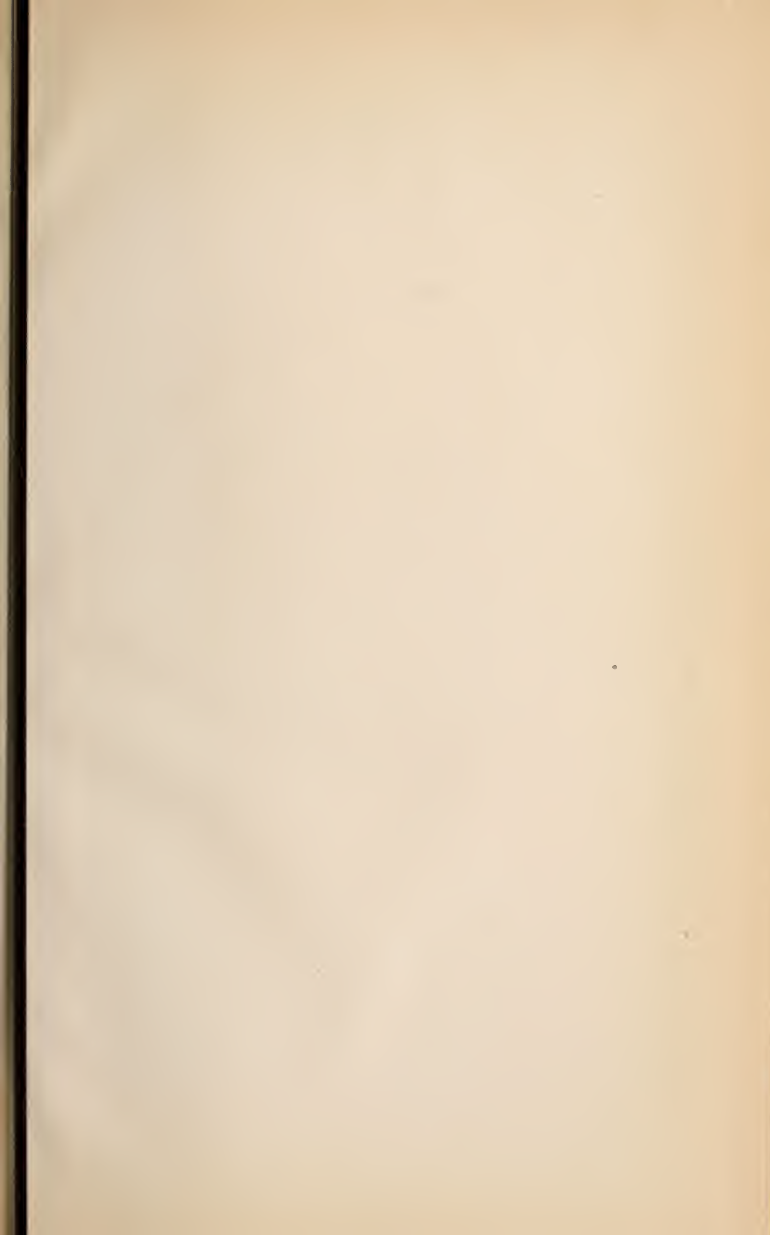
It was to teach us this science that the Sacred Heart opened to us its heavenly school and became itself our Teacher. It was to inflame our hearts with this love, that we were admitted into this Paradise of God, so that we might be worthy to dwell in it forever. For, this Paradise is both for time and for eternity; because the love of God which is to be our merit here, will also be our reward hereafter.

Let us then gather around our beloved Teacher, here on the summit of the mountain to which He has led us; and say to Him: "Lord, is it good for us to be here; here permit us to set up our tabernacles;" here let us dwell with Thee. In thy own Sacred Heart we desire to live and labor. In it and for it and for the love of our God which it will kindle in us, we will offer the perpetual sacrifice of our pains and sufferings, of our

trials and hardships, of our joys and consolations. In this love we will be like Thee, humble and meek, patient and forgiving, zealous and prudent, unworldly and unselfish. These flowers of Thy Paradise shall bloom on the altar which our gratitude will erect in Thy Heart. We will make our own hearts Thy altar. We will anoint it with the oil of our joyous thanksgiving and burn on it the incense of our homage. A holocaust shall be laid on it of our entire being. Our souls with their faculties shall be consecrated to Thee. Our bodies with their senses shall be bound to Thy service. Our talents, our power, our energies, all the gifts of Thy bounty, shall be Thine forever. Oh! may this holocaust be inflamed with Thy love, consumed in its holy and heavenly flames; that it may ascend in an odor of sweetness, and that in it and with it, our purified souls may rise to Thee and be united to Thy love for evermore! Amen.

THE END.





~~BT~~

~~585~~

BV
2157

P

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 021 898 943 3

